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1854.







"I am going out to hunt this morning," said Mark Brady.
—p. 65.

A STRIKE FOR FREEDOM:

OR

LAW AND ORDER.

A BOOK FOR BOYS.

BY

MRS. L. C. TUTHILL,

AUTHOR OF "I WILL BE A GENTLEMAN," "ONWARD! RIGHT
ONWARD!" &c.

"Wouldst thou be a dweller in the woods, and cast away the cords
that bind thee?" — TUPPER.

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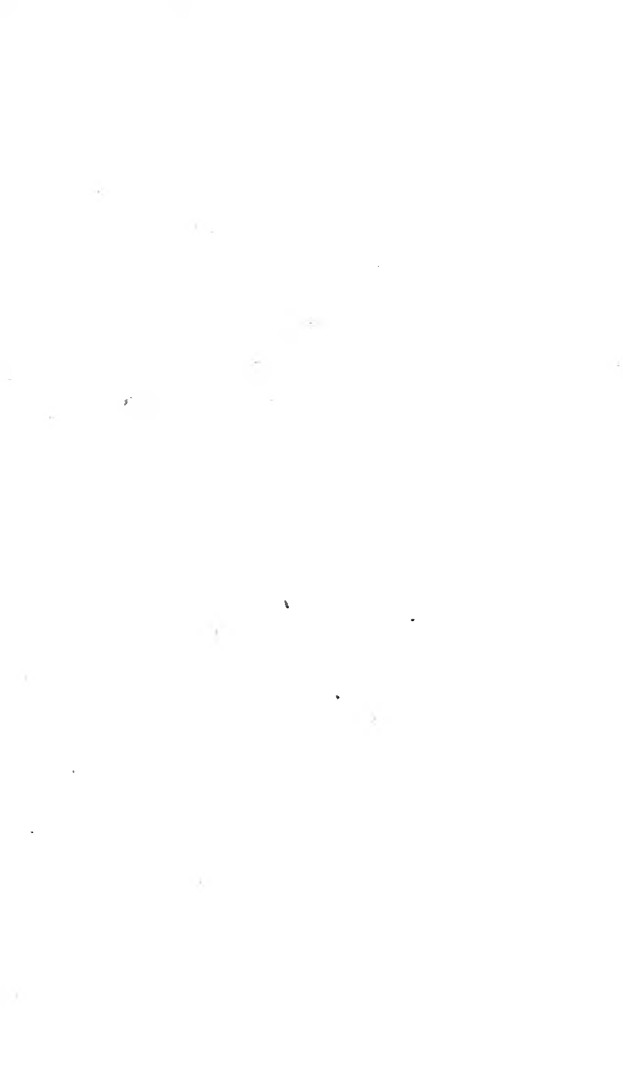
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A STRIKE FOR FREEDOM.

CHAPTER I.

THE HAPPY CIRCLE

THE sixth boy was yet to arrive. A happy circle it was, that gathered around the table of Mr. Manley, at Nut Hill. There was but one vacant seat at the round table, at which they were taking their breakfast, and that was reserved for the sixth pupil.

Mr. and Mrs. Manley had no children of their own, and they devoted themselves to the education of these boys with a zeal and enthusiasm worthy of the noble cause.

Mrs. Manley presided at the table. Before her stood a large tea-tray, — the cups were white as snow, and the silver brightly

polished. The lady herself was the very pattern of neatness and refinement. A sweet, natural smile came readily to her intelligent face, and her manner towards the boys was that of a perfect lady, softened by maternal tenderness.

Mr. Manley sat opposite,—a tall and remarkably elegant man, dressed with scrupulous propriety. Easy and affable in his conversation, the boys listened to him with evident pleasure. And they evinced not less pleasure as he bountifully supplied their plates from the nice beefsteak before them. A happier set of boys one would not desire to see.

At the right of Mr. Manley sat Meredith Long, — or, as he was usually called by the boys, Merry Long, — a fat, chubby little fellow, with rosy cheeks, and hair as soft and curling as that of a blue-eyed doll. Ah! it was a great trial to his fond mother to send her pretty pet away from her; but she knew there were few such schools as Mr. Manley's, and, for her Merry's good, she submitted to the trial.

Next to Meredith Long sat Percy Dobbs, — the dark-haired Percy, — the little beau, neat and prim as a new pin.

The next was a pale-faced, 'thin lad, with large, gray eyes and a broad, fair forehead. He was at the left hand of Mrs. Manley, and evidently she was well pleased to have him there. Frederic John Milton Allan was the name he bore, but he was quite contented to be called Fred Allan.

At the right hand of Mrs. Manley was Mark Brady, — the tallest, stoutest boy in the school. He was fifteen years old; all the others were somewhat younger.

The fifth was Israel Putnam Holley, — a lad who could eat more sugared peaches, within a given time, than any boy of the same age that ever was known. Mark Brady once said, that Put Holley always reminded him, at meal-times, of a toad in a mud-puddle after a shower of rain. It was a very inelegant comparison, but Mr. Manley himself could scarcely refrain from smiling at its aptness.

The seat at Mr. Manley's left was vacant.

Obliging reader, please to form in your "mind's eye" a perfect picture of Mr. Manley, Merry Long, Percy Dobbs, Fred Allan, Mrs. Manley, Mark Brady, Put Holley, and the vacant seat, at the breakfast table.

The picture would not be complete without the black waiter, Tom Nolins, with his white apron, and, if possible, still whiter teeth, — teeth, by the way, which were too apt to be exhibited when any thing droll was said at table.

Just as they were about rising from table, Tom was called out of the room, and soon returned with a letter for Mr. Manley.

"Stay a moment, if you please," said he, opening the letter.

After reading it, he passed it across the table to Mrs. Manley, and said, "Our sixth will be here to-morrow. You may leave the table, boys."

The five left for the play-ground, or gymnasium, where they passed an hour every morning after breakfast, and another hour before supper.

Mrs. Manley read as follows:—

“TO MR. ARCHIBALD MANLEY,
“*Nut Hill, Brantonville.*

“Sept. 4th.

“Dear Sir,—I am happy to be allowed the privilege of placing my son Nicholas in your family. Providence permitting, we shall arrive at Nut Hill on the 7th instant.

“As to my boy, he is a good-hearted fellow,—nobody’s enemy but his own. I hope you will be so successful with his education as to render him one of the first men in the country. It is my ambition to have him become a very distinguished politician. I shall confer more fully with you when I have the honor to see you.

“Respectfully, &c.

“THOMAS BOLTON.”

With a slight ominous shake of the head, Mrs. Manley handed back the letter, saying, “Our boys are now so good and obedient, I almost dread to have another come among them.”

“They are remarkably obedient to the

rules of the school and the family ; — a good and sufficient reason for the order and the happiness that we at present enjoy," replied Mr. Manley.

CHAPTER II.

THE GOOD-HEARTED FELLOW.

THE 7th of the month arrived, and with it Mr. Bolton and his son.

“This is my son Nick, Mr. Manley,” said Mr. Bolton, giving the boy a hearty slap on the back; “somewhat of a rogue, but a good-hearted fellow as ever lived. He has been much indulged, and you must not be too hard upon him at first. I can get along with the scamp well enough, but he gives his mother some trouble, and for her sake I place him here; and he will be much better taught than he could be at home. But, my dear Sir, do not break the boy’s spirit. I would not have him come back to me a broken-down, mean-spirited, milk-and-water character.”

"Excuse me, Sir," said Mr. Manley, surprised at this peculiar introduction; "had we not better discuss this subject by ourselves?"

The boy's dark eyes twinkled, and a meaning smile played about his handsome mouth during the introductory speech of his father; he could scarcely maintain respectful gravity as Mr. Bolton replied,—"Just as you say, Sir. I have no objections to the fellow's knowing that I do not wish him to be held in, at first, with too tight a curb-rein. Young colts will *cut up* sometimes. But Nick, my boy, you may go and make yourself acquainted with the boys we saw playing in the yard, while I have some further conversation with Mr. Manley. Stay a moment, though. Here is your mamma's parting present," continued Mr. Bolton, taking out a green and gold purse, richly ornamented. "She has been a long time manufacturing it, and it seems to be well filled."

"None the worse for that; I shall know how to reduce it," replied the boy, as the purse glided very naturally into his pocket.

As he left the apartment, Mr. Bolton said, with a look of extreme satisfaction, "You see, Sir, he is not a tame calf."

"Few boys are wanting in what we usually term smartness," replied Mr. Manley.

"Well, Sir, that smartness is just what I like," added Mr. Bolton.

While the gentlemen pursued their conversation at some length, Nicholas found his way to the play-ground.

"Well, fellows, what's the fun?" demanded the stranger; "I suppose you all know I am Nick Bolton, quite at your service for any sport on foot." So saying, he extended his hand to the first boy he met.

"And what may I call you, Sir," he asked, as the boy timidly returned the salutation.

"Frederic John Milton Allan," stammered out the possessor of that weighty and responsible name.

"Stay, stay a bit!" exclaimed Nicholas. "How many are there of you rolled into one? You don't look able to bear such a burden on your narrow shoulders."

"Do you mean to insult my friend?" fiercely demanded Mark Brady, stepping forward and doubling up a pair of large, red fists.

"Your *frind*, Paddy! and shure I did not know he was your frind, my darlint," said Nicholas, with the broadest Irish brogue.

"My name is Mark Brady, and Fred Allan is my friend, and shall not be insulted by you, Sir."

"Mr. Brady is somewhat hasty," said Percy Dobbs, advancing with a mincing gait, and making a very low bow to Nicholas. "Mr. Brady is a kind of self-elected protector to Mr. Allan."

"And who elected you to settle my affairs, Percy Dobbs? tell me that!" exclaimed Mark Brady, now in a raving passion.

"Is this a comedy or a tragedy, boys?" asked Merry Long. "My motto is, 'Never fight when you can play; never cry when you can laugh.' Come, now, let us turn up a copper, — heads, fight and cry; tails,

laugh and be friends." As he said this, he threw up a bright red cent. "Tails, I declare! Now let us shake hands all round." So saying, he took Nicholas by the hand, — "Welcome, long-expected sixth! my name is Merry Long."

"I should not think you could be *merry long* among these quarrelsome fellows," said Nicholas, giving him a hearty shake of the hand.

"We are not quarrelsome," said Putnam Holley, scraping the sand with his right foot, in lieu of a bow.

"This is the friendly manner in which I would have made your acquaintance at first," said Percy Dobbs. "Allow me to introduce Israel Putnam Holley, from the West, Mr. Bolton."

Holley stood scraping his foot, quite abashed at this formal introduction.

"Come forward, Put," said Merry Long. "You would come quick enough if you were called to supper."

"Glad to see you here," said Holley, awkwardly extending his hand.

"And I, too, wished to welcome you kindly," said Fred Allan, timidly.

"Well, you are a nice little pair of tweezers, Fred Allan. Place my first rudeness to the account of John Milton," replied Nicholas, grasping the extended hand.

"Tweezers! why do you call my friend tweezers?" demanded the yet unpacified Mark Brady.

"Because he happens to enjoy very short, crooked legs, and a very long body, giving him a striking resemblance to a pair of tweezers. No disrespect is intended to *Mister* Allan; on the contrary, I quite fancy your friend."

"Come, come, Mark Brady, you can take a joke as well as any one; hold out your hand and be friends with our sixth," said Merry Long.

"Not till he makes a formal apology to our third," persisted Mark.

"But if the principal is satisfied, the second ought to be; I take it that is the rule in all honorable quarrels," said Percy Dobbs.

"Certainly, Mr. Dobbs," replied Nicholas,

with an exceedingly low bow, the very counterpart to the one he had received from Percy.

"But, upon my word, boys, I did not mean to quarrel with you," continued Nicholas, with a frank, good-natured smile. "Let us be friends."

"Now you speak like a gentleman," said Mark Brady, spreading out his broad palm, and then giving Nicholas so hearty a shake that his very shoulder ached for ten minutes after.

"There goes the supper-bell," exclaimed Holley, clapping his hands.

"Which sound always reaches your long ears two seconds before it does mine," remarked Percy Dobbs, in a very consequential manner.

"I am sorry your extremely short ears serve you no better," said Mark Brady, laughing heartily.

This was followed by a general laugh at the would-be-elegant Dobbs, who, happening to have an enormous pair of red ears, wore his hair very long to cover them.

"You are not polite at all, Sirs," said Percy, as he followed the other boys from the play-ground.

"No, we are not," said Allan, putting his arm around his companion's neck, as they walked together to supper. "I beg your pardon, Percy."

Boys are frequently rude to each other in this way, although they well know that personal defects are not proper subjects for ridicule.

CHAPTER III.



LAW AND ORDER.

THE next morning, after breakfast, Mr. Manley took Nicholas into his private study.

“Sit down, Nicholas, I have several things to say to you,” said he, kindly. “It is expected that every member of our little community pay great respect to the laws by which it is governed. These laws are for our mutual benefit, and shall be fully made known to you. They are all founded upon the broad, general principle, ‘Do unto others as you would have others do unto you.’ It is impossible, you know, my boy, for any well-conditioned community to exist without laws. If they have none, they must be in a state of anarchy and confusion, or be governed by a despot.”

Nicholas began to look rather impatiently at Mr. Manley, as though he thought this was the beginning of a tedious lecture.

"I will detain you but a short time," continued Mr. Manley. "The community into which you have now entered is a civilized, an intellectual, and a Christian community. We expect to keep the laws of the land, the laws of the school, and the moral law, — the law of the ten commandments.

"In obedience to law and order, you will find your highest good. Love to God, and love to man, should be your motives for obedience. Pray to God, daily, to assist you in keeping his commandments, and ask his forgiveness if you should be so unhappy as to break them, — ask his forgiveness, for Christ's sake. I will leave you here for half an hour, to study carefully the laws or rules of the school and the family, that you need not err through ignorance."

So saying, Mr. Manley placed a paper on the table before Nicholas, and left him to digest the laws for himself.

They were brief and simple. The hours for study and recreation were mentioned, and certain hours specified when the boys must not be off the grounds belonging to Nut Hill. Neatness and order were to be observed in dress, rooms, and in school.

Politeness, under the better name of Christian kindness, was recommended as the governing principle in all the intercourse of the boys with their friends, Mr. and Mrs. Manley, and with each other.

After Nicholas had glanced over the paper, he threw it aside, saying to himself, "Pretty stiff place this ; but I reckon I shall get along swimmingly."

CHAPTER IV.



FROLIC THE FIRST.

AFTER the very unpromising introduction of Nicholas Bolton to his school-fellows, it would scarcely seem probable that he could become a general favorite. Yet so it was. He had not been more than a week at Nut Hill, before his companions thought there was nobody equal to Nick Bolton. His intimacy was considered the most desirable thing in the world. He was quick to learn his lessons, and as quickly forgot them. But his quickness gave him time to help others, which he readily did.

His well-filled purse afforded him the means of "treating" to fruit and confectionary, from the tiny shop of a Frenchman who

had lately established himself not far from the gate at Nut Hill.

Mrs. Manley, who had shaken her head so ominously at the introduction of *the good-hearted fellow* into the family, was beginning to like him, in spite of his faults.

Mr. Manley wrote to Mr. Bolton that Nicholas was going on bravely with his studies, and he trusted that the favorable anticipations which his parents had formed would not be disappointed.

Put Holley, whose fondness for eating often led him astray, proposed to Nicholas, one Saturday evening, to rob the orchard of a neighbouring farmer.

Now, Nicholas did not care a straw about the apples, but he had heard that robbing orchards was capital fun. Moreover, by some surprising mistake with regard to the rights of others, boys at school, and older boys at college, have long considered robbing orchards and hen-roosts a very pardonable offence, — quite different from robbing the mail, or a money-drawer; yet they are equally transgressions of the commandment, "Thou shalt not steal."

Nicholas consented to go, and coaxed Merry Long to be of the party. They slyly escaped from Nut Hill at eight o'clock in the evening, filled a pillow-case which they had taken for the purpose, and, unmolested by man or dog, escaped with their booty.

It was, on the whole, a very tame affair, quite different from what Nicholas expected. The three boys hid the apples under the carriage-house and went to their beds, without having been suspected of absence from the premises of Nut Hill.

The next day was Sunday. The three boys felt guilty and ashamed, although no one but themselves knew of the theft. Merry Long whispered to Nicholas, as he went to church arm in arm with him, "I feel cheap as dirt, don't you?"

"No," replied Nicholas, "for I will not eat one of the apples."

"But Holley will," replied Merry.

"He is a mean fellow, then," was the response; "his whole soul might be shut up in a cream-cake."

CHAPTER V.



A RAPID DECLINE.

ON Monday morning, for the first time since he had been at Nut Hill, Nicholas could not recite his Latin lesson ; for a very good reason, — he had not studied it. And yet he was angry, most unreasonably angry, with Mr. Manley, for giving him a mark of disgrace.

This one fault, as is often the case, rendered him careless, and throughout the morning he was guilty of several others. He upset a bottle of ink all over the floor. Then, when he found that he was blamed for what he considered an accident, he tore all the history lessons, which he had carefully written, entirely out of his book. Not satisfied

with this mischief, he wrote some impertinent sentences in his composition exercise, an exercise which was to be read aloud.

One of these sentences was, — “If requested to define a *despot*, I should say, a tyrant ; for example, the master of a school.”

Another was, — “It is dangerous to place power in the hands of a man who does not know how to use it.”

After reading these specimens of impertinence, Mr. Manley quietly and calmly ordered Nicholas to go to his own room, and stay there till he summoned him to his private study for an explanation.

Nicholas left with a haughty stride, and when he reached the door of the school-room he turned round and said, with a supercilious nod, — “Not so much your humble servant, Sir, as you would wish me to be.”

Mr. Manley went on with the exercises of the school as if nothing uncommon had disturbed the usual order and tranquillity. Before dismissing the boys, however, he forbade their holding any communication with Nicholas Bolton.

At dinner-time he sent up a tray amply supplied with food to the room of the delinquent. Apparently, he had a good appetite, for it came down empty, excepting that there was upon it a saucy note for Mr. Manley.

Mr. Manley replied to the note in a calm, dignified manner, setting before Nicholas in a strong light the impropriety of his conduct, and begging him, for the sake of his parents and for his own sake, to examine the whole matter dispassionately. "When you have come to a right and honest decision with regard to your misconduct, I have no doubt," concluded Mr. Manley, "that you will make the *amende honorable*, by begging my pardon."

"Not yet, old fellow," said Nicholas to himself.

He then employed an hour in writing playful, friendly notes to all his companions; which they were silly enough to value highly, — so silly, as to think themselves honored by a correspondence with a boy deservedly in disgrace.

The notes Nicholas tied together and

threw out of the window ; he entreated that his friends would answer them, tie their notes to a stone, and send them through the same window.

They did so.

Their notes were short and characteristic : —

“I could have fought the old Gov., that I could, with right good-will.

“Yours to command,

“MARK BRADY.”

“I am afraid, dear Nicholas, you have done wrong, but I am very sorry for you.

“Your true friend,

“FREDERIC ALLAN.”

“You are, Mr. Bolton, a bold fellow, and I believe you frightened Mr. Manley out of his wits. I should not wonder if he proved himself a real coward. I have always before this considered him a perfect gentleman.

“Very respectfully,

“PERCY DOBBS.”

“Why, old Nick, what a hullabaloo you have kicked up. I did not think you had so much spunk in you. Hold out strong; it will be all the better for us.

“MERRY LONG.”

“Meet me, my dear boy, just after dark, at Ribeau’s shop. You can steal out at prayer-time. I have something droll to tell you.

“ISRAEL PUTNAM HOLLEY.”

CHAPTER VI.

FROLIC THE SECOND.

MONSIEUR RIBEAU was reported to be the funniest of little Frenchmen, and was known to be a skilful confectioner. The little shanty in which he had established himself contained but one room, which served the quadruple purpose of parlour, bedroom, kitchen, and shop. The front window, — it had but one, — a large bow-window, was filled with an enchanting array of cakes, candies, and colored tissue-paper. A white curtain was so arranged in the back side of the window as to exclude all impertinent gazers from viewing the interior. But if eyes could devour, as they are sometimes poetically accused of doing, little Monsieur Ribeau would

not have had a sweet morsel left in that attractive bow-window.

When any thing was wanting from the shop, the customers were obliged to lift a ponderous knocker upon the door. A sliding pannel in the door was then cautiously opened, and the applicant made known what it was that he wished to purchase. But, alas for the child who had but a penny or two in his pockets! — the Frenchman would receive only silver. Nothing of this singular being was ever seen, excepting the thin, white hand which was reached out with confectionery, and into which the silver was dropped. This mystery excited a deal of wonder and curiosity in the village and at Nut Hill.

Mr. Manley and his excellent wife appeared to be the only persons who knew any thing about Monsieur Ribeau, and whatever the secret was, they carefully kept it to themselves.

Nicholas escaped from his room at the time named by Putnam Holley, and got beyond the gate without being observed. He

had not been there five minutes before he was joined by Holley.

“A hard day you have had of it, Nick ; I thought you would like something good by this time,” said he.

“I have had a good dinner and supper ; I am not hungry. Was that all you wanted ?” replied Nicholas, half provoked that his friend had cajoled him into this place, merely that he might gratify his own well-known taste for the Frenchman’s confectionery.

“Now do not be displeased, my dear, good fellow. I have something to tell you. This Frenchman, who pretends to be the Man in the Iron Mask, the Wandering Jew, or some such strange, mysterious personage, is suspected to be a woman, or rather a young lady.”

“Nonsense !” exclaimed Nicholas, “I do not believe a word of it.”

“Well, I do. You know Monsieur will receive nothing but silver.”

“That may be very provoking to you, when you have only coppers to spend, but does not prove that it is a woman,” replied Nicholas.

"But have you not remarked how very white and small the hand is into which we drop the silver?"

"I have thought it looked like the hand of a gentleman, and perhaps he may be an emigrant of distinction."

"You may be as incredulous as you please; but Tom Nolins says the only person he has ever seen go into the shop, or come out of it, is a small woman, with a close bonnet and a veil over her face."

"That looks a little more like an argument," Nicholas replied, becoming more interested in the matter.

"It would be somewhat dangerous to rap with that tremendous knocker, which, you know, we always hear at Nut Hill, but I will tap upon the sliding panel."

And he did tap upon it, again and again, without receiving an answer. "A pound of vanilla candy is wanted," he said, as loud as he durst under the circumstances. Still no answer, although there was a bright light in the bow-window.

"Let us contrive some way to smoke out

the object, and see how it looks," said Holley.

"I will jump over the fence and go around to the back-door ; perhaps there is a window on the other side of the house not so carefully curtained."

Nicholas was over the fence in a moment, but scarcely had he alighted upon the ground before he heard a shriek from his companion. Holley, whose mouth watered for some delicious cocoanut-cakes temptingly near, dashed the glass out with his elbow, and put in his hand to seize the cakes. A strong cord, with a slipper-noose, was instantly thrown around the pilfering hand, and made fast within.

The shriek brought Nicholas back again as quickly as he went over.

"O, my hand ! my hand ! Let go !" screamed the terrified Holley.

"Let go there, you vile old Frenchman," shouted Nicholas. "Let go, I tell you, or I will smash your window to atoms."

In spite of the threat, the hand was not released. Nicholas snatched up stone after

stone from the ground, and threw them until not a whole pane was left in the window. Smash went the glass vases, and lozenges and sugar-plums rattled like hail upon the ground. Smash went china plates, scattering the cakes in every direction. Still the hand was held fast.

"Here is my knife," said Holley, taking it from his pocket with his left hand; "here, take it, and cut the cord, quick, for mercy's sake."

Nicholas reached in his hand to cut the cord, but as he did so a noose was thrown round it, and he, too, was made prisoner.

They both set up a fearful yell, and kicked and thumped with all their might.

The lamp in the window had escaped the general destruction, and was burning brightly. It shone upon the distorted faces of the boys, who were writhing with agony.

"What is all this?" inquired Mr. Manley, stopping in front of the shop, with Mrs. Manley leaning on his arm. "Nicholas Bolton and Putnam Holley! What does all this mean? What are you doing here?"

"O, my wrist, my wrist! O, my hand, my hand!" exclaimed Holley.

Nicholas bore the torture, like a Spartan, in silence.

"But how came the hands there?" asked Mrs. Manley, laughing at the ridiculous appearance of the boys thus adroitly caught in a trap.

"We could not make the old Frenchman open the door," yelled out Holley. "Oh! oh!"

"That is no reason why you should break his window; every man's house is his castle. He has, besides, been requested not to let my boys purchase any thing of him at forbidden hours. You have broken the laws of the land and the laws of the school, and must be severely punished."

The cords were now suddenly cut, and the boys stood wringing their aching hands.

"Perhaps they have received sufficient punishment," suggested the kind-hearted Mrs. Manley.

"That was an indirect punishment; they must pay a heavy penalty for their mischief,

Law and order must be respected. Go directly home to Nut Hill, and do not come out of your rooms again till to-morrow morning. We should return with you, but we have an engagement which we must fulfil, and shall not be home till half-past ten to-night."

Nicholas during all this time had not spoken a word, but anger was burning fiercely within his bosom. As soon as he was out of Mr. Manley's hearing, he exclaimed,—"Law and Order! Ridiculous catchwords!—I wish I might never hear them again. We should be a thousand times happier if there were no such restrictions upon us. I do not doubt the savages were happier and better men than these sticklers for Law and Order."

"Those must have been perfectly delightful times, when every body helped themselves to what every body wanted," said Put Holley.

"I do not see the use, now, of our being imprisoned, and tormented with study for the best part of our lives. I should like,

of all things, freedom to range where I please."

"That would be glorious! But where would we go?"

"Anywhere, anywhere, rather than stay here and be punished severely without sufficient reason."

Just as Nicholas uttered these words, a large wagon, drawn by four stout horses, came rumbling along. They were now at the gate of Nut Hill. A lamp upon a post shone into the face of the wagoner, a jolly-looking young man, apparently about twenty years old.

"Holloa, Mister, which way are you driving?" asked Nicholas.

"Right t' other way, master."

"What do you mean by that?"

"I mean I am going down to the Washington Tavern to bait self and horses, and then I am going to drive off again in that quarter," said he, pointing in the opposite direction to the way in which he was going.

"Is not that 'bock agin Sawney'?"

A sudden thought struck Nicholas. "What load have you got?" he asked.

"Just nothing at all; I am going fifty miles farther, to get a load of rags for our famous factory down in Dunstanville. I dare say you youngsters have blotted over reams of our paper."

"You are going to stop at yonder tavern?"

"Yes, where they hang out that awful morichature (caricature) of Washington. But you ask a great many questions, stranger, for a man of your size; what are you driving at?"

"I will meet you before the great stable-door, at the tavern yonder, in half an hour, and tell you why I ask so many questions. One more only at present. Do you go farther to-night?"

"Hey! you are a queer 'un. I go thirty miles before daylight."

"I will be at the place I name in half an hour, and tell you something that will be for your advantage. Ask no questions at the tavern."

The wagoner drove off.

"What do you want with this man?" asked Holley, eagerly.

"I want to make a bargain with him to take us all off on a spree."

Holley was startled at the boldness of this reply. "What, all six?" he eagerly asked.

"Yes, all six. We will depart from abominable Law and Order this very night, and leave Manley to take care of his pets by himself. Will you go?"

"If the other boys will," replied Holley, timidly.

"But the other boys *must*! Remember, it was for you, to-night, that I got into all this trouble. Besides, I have all the other boys' notes in my pocket, and could show Manley that they, too, have broken the laws. Of course, I would not, if I could help it, do such an ungenerous thing. But hurry, hurry! We have a mighty deal of business to do in a precious little time."

So saying, they hastened to the school-room, where the boys were assembled to study their lessons for the morrow.

CHAPTER VII.



A SUDDEN START.

ALTHOUGH it was only a little chilly in the evening at this season, a bright wood-fire was burning upon the hearth, giving a cheerful air to the school-room. Around a table covered with green baize and brilliantly lighted sat the four boys.

“Look at our hands!” exclaimed Nicholas as he entered, extending his red and swollen hand, and holding Holley by the arm with the other.

A deep red mark, with some blood, was upon the wrists of both the boys, and the hands were purple and swollen.

The boys started from their seats. “How did it happen? Tell us at once.”

Nicholas, with the eloquence of a young Demosthenes, told the story of their *wrongs*, as he called them, and ended with a violent philippic against Mr. Manley.

"He and his wife will not be home till half past ten to-night, and fortune favors us wonderfully. Let us go and have a rare frolic. There is a nice empty wagon down at the tavern, that will take us all. You know Mr. Manley will be so glad to get us back, that he will easily forgive and receive us again. Come, boys, we will have capital fun!"

"I am the man for you," said Mark Brady, throwing his book across the room. "Life in the woods for me."

"Go, then, and pack up as many things as you can find of your own that we shall want."

"I will go, too," said Merry Long.

"Then, pack my carpet-bag, and your own, and when you have done so, throw them out of the window, run down, pick them up, and make your way to the tavern as quick as possible. Put, you run and pack, too."

"Come, Fred Allan, my man," continued Nicholas, slapping him on the back; "we shall not take any comfort without you and Percy; come along, — we shall have the rarest sport in the world."

"Are we at liberty to come back whenever we please?" asked Percy Dobbs.

"Just when you please. We go for freedom. Nobody is obliged to go or stay, unless they choose."

"How much money can we muster," said Percy.

"There is mine," replied Nicholas, emptying the contents of his purse upon the table. "One five-dollar piece, a three-dollar note, and some change. I dare say the others have, all together, quite as much."

"I have but three dollars; but, Fred, I dare say you have more; you are as rich as Cræsus."

"But I do not know that I shall go. I am afraid you are rushing into dreadful mischief."

"Now, do not be so cowardly and mean. You surely would not stay behind to report

us. I believe it is because you are so stingy that you will not spare your money. We will not ask a penny of you, if you will go yourself."

"I am not stingy," said Frederic Allan, throwing a ten-dollar gold-piece and some change upon the table.

Nicholas swept all the money into his purse, saying triumphantly, "Now we are all agreed, — we shall have a glorious time! Hurry, hurry! and meet me in the stable-yard. Remember, we are all perfectly free to return."

It was a beautiful starlit night. Nicholas hurried on to the tavern. The wagoner had taken his own *bait*, as he called it, and, with a lantern in his hand, was just giving his horses some oats as Nicholas entered the yard.

"Well, Mr. — what may I call you? here I am," said he.

"So I see. Moses Mason is the name my mother gave me, and I go by it still, when they do not, for shortness' sake, call me Mo Ma. And what is your name, young Sir?"

"Young Nick, my mother calls me; Old Nick, the boys prefer. But I have important business with you. Will you take six of us as far as you go to-night?"

"Six! What, six boys?"

"Yes, six jolly boys on a spree."

"I like fun as well as any body, but I cannot take you, unless you can pay well for it."

"I will give you six dollars."

"Say ten, and I will carry you as far as I go before morning, and that is thirty good miles."

"It is too much, but you shall have it," said Nicholas, handing him the bright gold-piece he had just received from Fred Allan.

The wagoner held it before the lantern, and turned it over and over. "Good, I declare," said he, slipping it into his pocket, and thrusting his tongue into one cheek. "Where are your six?"

"Here they are," said Nicholas, as Mark Brady appeared, laden with baggage, and followed, at no great distance, by Merry Long, with a carpet-bag on each arm.

"Be quiet, and stow yourselves upon the bottom of the wagon," said Moses; "there is plenty of soft straw there. It is well," he added, "that all the people of the tavern are just now at supper."

Percy Dobbs and Fred Allan now came into the yard, and soon all five were snugly stowed in the bottom of the wagon. Putnam Holley had not yet appeared.

The wagoner grew impatient. "All ready!" he exclaimed, snapping his long whip.

"We must go without the sneak, if he does not soon appear," said Nicholas; "but wait one minute longer."

The minute was gone, — the wagoner started, and had got outside the yard, when Holley came, dragging a pillow-case of apples with one hand, and with his valise under his arm.

"Here comes the last of the troop," said the wagoner; "crawl in behind."

"What kept you so long?" demanded Nicholas, impatiently.

"The bag of apples," he whispered, as he hoisted them in.

"Just like you. Jump in. You would run the risk of breaking your neck for an apple."

Moses had now got fairly started; but a man came out of the tavern, and cried out, "Stop! stop!"

"Drive on," said Nicholas.

"No, no, let us see what the fellow wants," said Moses.

Moses stopped, and the man said, "I want to go about six miles down the road. I will give you half a dollar to carry me."

"Climb up on the high seat with me, then," replied Moses, who, now he was in the way of it, was for making the most of the carrying trade.

Greatly to the consternation of the boys, their fellow-traveller proved to be Tom Nollins, Mr. Manley's black waiter. He had taken the advantage of his master's absence, and had gone to the tavern before Nicholas started from Nut Hill. The successful escape of the boys was owing to his having deserted his post, Mr. Manley having charged him to keep a strict watch at Nut Hill.

The runaways kept as quiet as lambs, only they trembled not a little when they heard the well-known voice of the waiter. They had not gone more than three miles, however, before the monotonous motion of the wagon had lulled them all to sleep, excepting Frederic Allan. He was wide awake, and in tears. Already he regretted the hasty step he had taken. Regret, however, did not produce genuine repentance. He half resolved to escape, and return to Mr. Manley. He even went so far as to whisper, "Moses, Moses," but his courage failed him. A want of moral courage was Frederic Allan's greatest fault, or, more properly speaking, the cause of all his faults; for he knew what was right, and his intentions were good; but through this weakness, he sometimes acted in opposition to the dictates of conscience.

"What load have you got to-night?" asked the waiter.

"I am going for a load. I often go empty when I am sent for a load of rags," was the equivocal reply.

"Your wagon moves heavily," said Tom.

"It is a heavy, rumbling old concern. They say we are going to have a railroad, one of these days, right through the woods. I do n't know where they won't send them *locumfocums* next, if they get to blazing through these out-of-the-way parts."

"Why, now, you see that would be a great 'commodation to me, when I want to be off on a spree."

"There 's both rhyme and reason in that," as my grandmother used to say. "So you are off on your own hook! Where do you live?"

"At Mr. Manley's of Nut Hill. A gentleman he is, who is eddicating six boys," was the answer.

Moses thrust his tongue farther into his cheek than usual, as he said, "And what do these six boys do of an evening?"

"Sit in the school-room and study. I see them now, I 'magine, hard at it. But after all, they are the comfortablest boys in the land, — have all that heart can wish."

Frederic Allan sighed deeply, when he

thought how much more comfortable it was studying hard at Nut Hill, than jolting along over a rough road, crowded in with sleeping boys, lying upon the bottom of a wagon upon straw ; above all, running away from friends and duty. Again, he was about to call out to the wagoner to stop. "But," thought he, "I can get out when Tom does and go back with him to-night." After this good resolution, he fell soundly asleep.

The sudden stopping of the wagon to let Tom get off awakened some of the sleepers, but not Frederic Allan.

"Where am I?" muttered Percy Dobbs.

"Hush! hush! That is Tom Nolins's voice. Glad am I that he has got to the end of his journey."

"Good night!" hallooed Tom to the wagoner. "Good night! and a safe voyage to your old empty wagon."

Moses gave the lash to his horses, and they started at full speed. "Success to your spree, and a good scolding from your master to-morrow morning," he shouted out to the waiter. The latter part of the salu-

tation was not heard by the person to whom it was addressed.

"I am sorry that Tom will be blamed," said Nicholas.

"How do you get on there, youngsters?" asked Moses.

"Nicely," said Nicholas. "Wake us before you get to the tavern where you intend stopping."

"It is not much of a tavern, only a kind of baiting-place."

"But you can get us some provisions."

"They do not have much to spare."

"Buy us a ham, a bag of potatoes, and some salt."

"Give me the money when we stop, and I will do the best I can for you. Was n't it a capital joke to have that black fellow mizzled?"

"Capital," replied Merry Long.

"Here, let me get at the apples," said Put Holley, dragging away at the pillow-case, and finally getting his hand in.

"Well thought of, Holley; pass them round." The scruples of Nicholas about

eating stolen fruit had vanished. Thus the conscience becomes weakened by being tampered with. Be guilty of one sin, and a hundred more are likely to be the consequence.

Before the apples were completely discussed, the boys were again all asleep.

CHAPTER VIII.

A COARSE BREAKFAST.

It was two o'clock in the morning before Moses arrived at the stopping-place, where he was to sleep till daylight. Then he was to awaken the boys, and give them some directions. It was a lonely place, in the midst of the forest. The only sound that disturbed the stillness of the night was the barking of a watch-dog. This continued for some time after their arrival.

"Are you not afraid of being robbed?" whispered Percy Dobbs to Nicholas.

"Not in the least," replied the latter, bravely. "I am thinking about our encampment in the woods. What a lucky thing it was, that Mark Brady brought off a

quantity of bed-clothes. Here, boys, just get out, — all of you, — and let us spread the blankets over us, for the night is getting chilly.’

This being accomplished, the sleepy run-aways were soon dreaming again of far-distant scenes.

When Moses awakened the sleepers, a few stars still lingered in the sky, but the east was glowing with the light of morning.

“Pack up your rattletraps and away,” said Moses.

The boys, aroused from their hard bed, rubbed their eyes, and looked about for a while, amazed and troubled.

“Have you brought us the provisions?” said Nicholas.

“I have, but I had to beg for them like a man on the point of starvation.”

“Here, Mark Brady, you are the strongest; take this ham, will you?”

“I can’t. I have Put Holley’s gun to carry, and all the bed-clothes,” said he, wrapping the blankets and sheets around the gun, and shouldering the immense bundle.

"I am glad you brought the gun. Well, Percy Dobbs, you can carry the ham."

"No, Sir! I have a large carpet-bag to carry. Why do you not carry it yourself?"

"Simply, because I have to tote the potatoes," replied Nicholas, throwing the heavy bag across one shoulder.

"I will take the ham, then," said Merry Long; "if somebody will carry my valise."

"I will," said Nicholas, putting it under the left arm, with which he carried his own carpet-bag.

"Do n't stand here parleying," exclaimed Moses. "You had better be off, for the people of the house will soon be stirring. Have you any matches? If you have n't, I will give you a box."

"Now, that is very kind in you, Moses," said Nicholas, pocketing the box, with great satisfaction.

"I am afraid you will get yourselves into a heap of trouble, my lads. I advise you, after you have had a little sport, to turn your faces towards your nice home at Nut Hill. Old Nick, you are a good-hearted fellow,

but rash. Now, march on, till you come to a white post ; jump over the fence, and you will find a footpath that will lead you right into the woods. There is not another house on this road, but the one we left, for seven miles. The footpath leads across the forest to another turnpike, about six miles off. The folks here sometimes go to meeting that way. Good by ! ”

“ Good by ! good by ! ” returned the boys, as they trotted off as fast as they could, laden as they were with luggage.

It was not long before they came to the white post. They found the footpath without difficulty, and after walking Indian file about a mile through the woods, they came to an open space, or clearing, of two or three acres. Here they stopped.

Merry Long threw down the ham, exclaiming, “ I declare, this is the hardest morning’s work that I ever did in my life. ”

A few old stumps remained about the clearing. One of them was large and charred. It had, on some former occasion, served for a fireplace.

"Here we will have our breakfast," said Nicholas, throwing the bag of potatoes down near the old charred stump. "Let us get brushwood and build a fire."

It was a bright, clear, September morning. The sky of serene blue was their canopy; a curtain of dark woods, gayly embroidered by an early frost, surrounded their spacious breakfast-parlour.

The party began to look quite cheerful, as the fire blazed up in the old stump, and preparations were making for their morning meal.

"We can broil ham on the coals, and roast potatoes in the ashes," said Holley, clapping his hands and shouting for joy.

"Gather more wood, my boys; we have not coals enough yet," said Nicholas, as he worked away at the ham, endeavouring to cut off some slices with a jack-knife.

The fire was replenished; the ham was at length broiled; but the potatoes were still hard.

"How shall we get the ham off the coals, without burning our fingers?"

“O, if I only had brought my silver fork !” exclaimed Percy Dobbs.

“Cut some sticks and sharpen them at the end. Quick, or the ham will be burnt.”

The boys cut the sticks, and thrust them into the ham ; and so keen was the appetite that the morning air had given, that they could not wait for the potatoes to be done, but devoured the relishing morsel of ham by itself.

“Now, Nick, I will take the jack-knife and cut some more ham, to eat with the potatoes, when they are done,” said Mark Brady.

“Very well,” replied Nicholas, who had been so anxious to provide for others, that he had not yet tasted a morsel himself. “Very well, and I will look about to find the path out of this open space, for we are too near human beings for comfort.”

Nicholas explored the ground, discovered the path, and then came back to partake of the breakfast.

“I never enjoyed a meal so much in my

life," said Merry Long. "What does make it relish so, I wonder!"

"Carrying the ham a mile before you eat it is the best sauce in the world to make it relish," said Frederic Allan.

"I am glad to hear you speak once more," replied Merry, "I thought you had lost the use of speech, and that you surely could never smile again, you have been looking so awfully glum all the morning."

"Really, now, is it not a delicious breakfast?" said Put Holley, as he threw away the skin of his seventh potato.

"It would have been, if I had only had my silver fork to eat it with," replied Percy Dobbs.

"Fudge!" exclaimed Mark Brady, "fingers were made before forks."

"And savages before gentlemen," was the reply.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Dobbs; I think Father Adam was as much of a gentleman as any of his descendants, but I do not think it was a silver fork that made him so."

CHAPTER IX.



AN ENCAMPMENT IN THE WOODS.

"WE are too near the road for an encampment; let us march on till we come to another opening. It would not do to fire a gun here, and we shall want some variety for our dinner," said Nicholas, shouldering again the potatoes, and marching forward.

The boys followed without a murmur, excepting Frederic Allan. He began to remonstrate against going farther, saying, "For my part, I should prefer returning to Mr. Manley."

"By no means; we cannot possibly spare you to-day," interrupted Nicholas. "And yet," he continued, with his kindest manner, "Freedom is our watchword, — go, if you like."

"It would be abominably mean for you to return and report us. I will not give my consent," said Mark Brady.

"Nor I," added Holley.

"Come, Fred, let us take up our rattle-traps, as Moses calls the luggage, and march on. We shall have a jolly time to-day, and to-morrow we will talk about returning. Come, be obliging, and help me carry the provender. I have slung the diminished ham across a stick; you take one end and I the other, and we shall get on finely."

Thus urged, Allan took hold of the stick and followed his companions. The path became more narrow as they advanced, showing that it was seldom trodden. Occasionally they made their way, by breaking off the boughs of hemlock and pine which obstructed their progress.

"It is well to leave our trail in this way; we shall easily find the path out of the woods," whispered Allan to Merry Long. "I do hope, even if the others should not consent, that you will return with me to-morrow."

Merry Long did not reply to Allan, but called out to the boy before him, "Percy Dobbs, how long have we been on this path?"

"Five hours," was the reply.

"Are we never coming to the end?" impatiently demanded Put Holley.

"Yes, you may halloo now, for we are out of the woods," said Nicholas, who went ahead.

"Hurra! hurra, boys!" exclaimed Mark Brady; "a beauty of a place it is for an encampment. The nuts will drop into our very mouths."

"And crack themselves in falling," added Merry Long.

It was, indeed, a beautiful spot. The warm glow of a September sun gave a bright and cheerful aspect to the opening. The grass had not lost its summer verdure, and the tall chestnut and walnut trees which surrounded the open space were only here and there touched with the footprints of Autumn.

"This is a real campus, made exactly

for our purpose," said Nicholas. "Throw down your invaluable load here, Mark Brady. This is the very spot for us to pitch our tent. See, there is a clear little brook not far distant."

"And, I declare, there is a flat rock that will just do for a table," exclaimed Put Holley, placing the few apples which still remained in the pillow-case near the natural table. 'The apples had been Put's solace the whole way, and Nicholas had occasionally given the wink to Mark, as he saw Holley munching them without passing any to his companions.

"Let us go to work and make our tent," said Nicholas.

"No, no, it is dinner-time; we will make a fire first, and have something to eat," replied Holley.

Mark Brady laughed heartily. "You have done nothing but eat ever since breakfast. You are for having your meals join together all the day through. I will go and shoot some birds before dinner."

"It is my gun," exclaimed Holley.

"You have insulted me, and you shall not use it. Give it to me, this instant!"

"Take it, then! But you have no percussion-caps, nor powder either, — they are mine, and safe in my pocket."

"Come, Mark and Put, don't let us have any quarrelling; we have enough else to do. We must cut down some poles for our tent. Those straight young maples, just touched by the frost a bright red, — they will do nicely. Let us take our knives, Mark, and cut them down. You and I will make the tent, while the others gather wood, make up a fire, and cook the dinner."

"Agreed, agreed," shouted Merry Long.

The poles were, after much labor, cut and fastened in the ground. They were about six feet tall, and had a crotch where the limbs of the trees first branched out; and thus they supported the crosspole for the tent. When the bed-quilt was thrown over, it was found too short to come to the ground.

"We must splice it with a blanket."

"A very good idea; but how?" asked Nicholas.

"Come to your dinner. It is fit for a king," shouted Merry Long.

"It is three o'clock, a very genteel hour," said Percy Dobbs, carefully taking up the skirts of his coat, as he seated himself upon a large stone by the table-rock.

"Here is your place, Nick; and here is yours, Mark," continued Merry. "I had the honor to set the table, and place the chairs."

"And I to cook the dinner."

"And a first-rate waiter and cook you are, Holley," exclaimed Nicholas, as he saw the ham and potatoes laid upon clean pieces of bark, and the apples and nuts spread upon green leaves.

Novelty, the country air, and hard labor, gave the runaways ravenous appetites, and their dinner was soon devoured.

"Now, what can we do about splicing the bed-quilt, the blanket, and the sheets, for the tent?" questioned Nicholas.

"I have needles and coarse thread in my valise," said Percy Dobbs.

"Indeed! Well, you are more useful

than I supposed a long-coated gentleman could be," replied Mark Brady.

The needles and thread were produced, and the boys soon sewed the tent covering together. They then fastened it down at the sides with wooden pegs, which they sharpened for the purpose. The ends they filled up with branches of hemlock and oak, the door itself being a large branch of oak, which they moved aside when they entered, and replaced after they were inside.

When they had completed the tent, the sun had gone down.

"We must keep up a bright fire," said Percy Dobbs, "to drive away the wolves."

"Wolves!" exclaimed Holley; "wolves!"

"Yes, wolves. There may be both wolves and bears in these woods."

"No danger of their coming near us. But you are right about keeping up the fire. We will have only some potatoes for our supper. How well it is that we thought of salt!"

"You are the royal *we*, Nicholas," remarked Frederic Allan, laughing.

Nicholas took no notice of this remark, but went with Mark and Merry Long to gather wood for the night. When they returned, supper was ready. They rekindled their fire, and, removing their stones from the table, sat around it.

Tired they were, with the hardest day's work they had ever done, and glad to go to sleep immediately after supper. They laid themselves down in the tent, disposing themselves as comfortably as they could, and soon fell asleep.

CHAPTER X.



EVERY MAN HIS OWN MASTER.

THE sun was far on its day's journey, when the sleepers awoke. They were stiff from lying upon their hard bed, after a day of such violent exercise, and many groans and "O dears," followed their attempts to rise.

The fire had gone out, and the wood they had collected was burnt up. The lazy grumbled, because they had to go farther into the forest to collect the fallen branches, and the hungry and thirsty grumbled, because they were hungry and thirsty.

"O dear ! O dear ! I wish I had a wash-basin, and a towel, and a toothbrush," said Percy Dobbs, as he stooped over the brook and washed his face and hands.

When he had finished his ablutions, he seated himself upon a rock, pulled out a hair-brush and a pocket-mirror, and arranged his pet locks over his ears. He then took out a clothes-brush and began brushing it, but finding some difficulty in removing the dirt it had contracted, he called out, "Come here, Put Holley, and brush my coat."

"Not I," said Put. "Every man is his own master here, and his own servant, too; I cook my own breakfast this morning, and leave every body to do the same."

And every body had to cook their own, and there was squabbling, and scolding, and a very unsatisfying meal.

"I am going out to hunt this morning," said Mark Brady.

"And as it is my gun, I shall go with you," replied Holley.

"Do not go far from us," was the caution Nicholas gave as they departed. "Now, boys, we have enough to do," he continued. "Let us make the tent more comfortable, by spreading the ground over with dry leaves. We will then arrange for our din-

ner, so that we may have it in comfortable order."

"Order! I thought there were to be no such things as Law and Order here," exclaimed Merry Long. "I do not choose to go picking up dry leaves, and bringing them by handfuls to the tent."

"Nor I, either," said Put Holley.

"Well, I shall tie up one end of a shirt, and thus make a bag of it," said Nicholas, suiting the action to the word, "and you, Frederic Allan, can take the pillow-case and the potato-bag, and we will fill one of them with leaves and the other with nuts."

There was something quite irresistible in the good humor of Nicholas. He was, too, so ready to take even more than his share of labor, and so generous in yielding the best of every thing to others, that he retained his influence over Frederic Allan. Although Allan bitterly regretted that he had yielded to that influence, again his courage failed, and he did as Nicholas requested.

Merry Long and Percy Dobbs sat lazily

by the fire. But as they occasionally heard the gay voices of Nicholas and his companion, they at length concluded that it would be better to assist them.

As Merry Long made his way through some thick bushes towards the place whence the voices came, he stumbled over some obstruction and fell flat upon the ground. He started up and turned round, in his senseless anger, to give the object, whatever it might be, a hearty kick. It was an old iron kettle, which had once stood on three legs, but, having had the misfortune to lose one, it had been thrown aside by the owner, and now was discovered as a treasure.

"Come here, Nick," bawled out Merry Long, raising up the kettle and exhibiting the prize he had stumbled upon.

"That is, indeed, a prize more precious than gold. Now, we will have our dinner cooked in style. It is rusty, but never mind; we can boil some of the fat of the ham in it, and it will soon be fit for use."

The boys were wonderfully delighted with their acquisition. They soon brought

the kettle into order, and boiled the chestnuts they had gathered, but they preferred to roast the potatoes, — the last, unfortunately, that they possessed.

They had finished their dinner, and Mark and Put Holley had not arrived. Night was coming on, and they began to be alarmed, lest the wanderers had ventured so far into the forest that they would never find their way out again. A threatening cloud had been for some time gathering in the west; it now spread rapidly over the sky. The wind moaned through the trees dolefully, and the darkness increased so suddenly, that the boys became fearfully alarmed for their companions.

“We will build up a large fire to guide them to the campus,” said Fred Allan, heaping on the wood.

“What was that?” exclaimed Percy Dobbs, starting up wildly; “is it not the howl of a wolf?”

“It is only the wind,” replied Nicholas.

“I hear something besides the wind,” said Frederic Allan. “Listen a moment.”

They held their breath and listened.

"Help! help!" The cry came from a distance, but they could not decide from what direction it came.

Again they listened, with intense eagerness.

"Nick! Nick Bolton!" The sound came more clearly, — a prolonged cry.

"It is Mark Brady's voice," said Nicholas; "I must go to him. But listen once more, that I may know what course to take."

"Fred! Fred Allan!" now sounded clear and loud, among the trees to the left of the tent. Then came a feebler, but a piercing cry, "O, help!"

"Something is the matter with Put Holley!" exclaimed Nicholas, rushing into the woods, followed by Fred Allan.

"Don't go! Pray, don't go and leave us!" implored Merry Long.

"Coming! coming!" yelled Nicholas, at the highest pitch of his voice.

"I am afraid to stay without you," urged Percy Dobbs.

“Keep up a bright fire,” was the command of Nicholas, as he penetrated into the wood. “Now, Fred, you must keep watch, so that we do not lose sight of the fire.”

Nicholas and Frederic had not gone far before they heard distinctly the voice of Mark Brady, saying, — “Keep up good courage; they hear and answer us. Nick Bolton!”

“Look out for the fire, and direct your course towards it,” shouted Nicholas.

“We see it, we see it,” was the almost instant reply.

“Then come on.”

“I cannot. Put Holley is badly hurt, and cannot walk a step farther.”

“We will come to you, then”; and Nicholas made a crashing among the branches, as he pushed his way among them to the place where the voices came from.

By the dim light, they could just distinguish the two boys. Mark had stuck tight to the gun, or, rather, he had tied his handkerchief to it and slung it across his back, while he partly carried and partly dragged his companion along.

“What ails Put?” eagerly asked both the boys at once.

“Hurt, hurt. Carry him to the campus, and I will tell you all about it.”

Nicholas and Frederic placed their hands firmly together, to make a seat for the suffering boy. Mark lifted him upon the seat thus made; he put his arms around the necks of his friends, and thus they carried him safely to the campus.

“Now, how glad I am that we spread the leaves in the tent,” said Nicholas, as they laid Holley down upon them.

“O dear! O dear!” exclaimed Put as they carried him along; “O dear! O dear!” as they put him down.

“Where are you hurt?” asked Frederic, kindly.

“O dear! O dear!” was the only reply.

Nicholas and Frederic hastened to the fire, where Mark Brady was telling his story.

“So you see, I shot the bear ——”

“How is that? Shot a bear!” exclaimed Nicholas and the rest of the hearers.

“Yes, shot the bear,” continued Mark.

“O for a drop of water!” cried out Put from the tent.

The boys had hitherto filled their hands and drank from them at the brook, or they had stooped down and lapped up the water like dogs. Now, how could they bring it to their suffering companion.

“The kettle, the kettle!” cried Merry Long, exultingly, as he ran to fill it at the brook. It was an awkward vessel to drink from, and Merry was obliged, when he had carried it into the tent, to dip the water out with his hand and give it to Holley in that manner, as well as he could; but it must be confessed that very few drops found their way into the mouth of the sufferer.

CHAPTER XI.



SHOOTING A BEAR.

WHEN Merry returned to the group around the fire, Mark was going on with his narrative of the day's adventures.

“ We went on, and on, without seeing a bird or even a squirrel. ‘ Since we can find no game,’ says I, ‘ let us shoot at a mark.’ I placed the leaf of an old Latin grammar on a tree, fired the shot out of my gun, and then placed in it two bullets. I had scarcely done so, when Put yelled out, ‘ A bear! a bear!’ pointed his finger towards it, and made for the nearest tree. The bear stood perfectly still; I fired, and hit him in the throat. Just as I did so, crash went the limb of a tree, and down tumbled Put upon the

ground. I ran to him and helped him up. 'Let us run for our lives,' said he, 'for there are a dozen more bears behind the one you shot.' We did run as fast as we could, till Put's strength gave out, and he could go no farther; then I carried and dragged him until my strength gave out."

"Hark!" exclaimed Percy Dobbs; "I hear a bear growling."

"Very likely," said Mark, "it is the bear's wife coming after me."

"It is only the wind," said Nicholas; "but tell me, where was Put hurt?"

"All over," he says; "fortunately he has not broken a bone. He said he was killed. I told him that would do for me to say, but not for a full-born Yankee."

"Boys, boys, have n't you something for me to eat?" cried out Put, from the tent. "I am half starved to death."

They had only some boiled chestnuts and a small piece of ham to divide between Mark and Put for their supper.

"Well, I shall go for some bear's meat in the morning, and we will have a nice steak for breakfast," said Mark.

"But suppose I do not choose to have you go off and leave us again," remarked Nicholas. "You might get lost, as you did to-day."

"*You* don't choose!" retorted Brady. "Who made you our captain? You brought us away from our nice, comfortable home, but that is no reason why you should set up your authority over us here."

"I say again, you shall not go away from us without my permission."

"I shall not ask it of you, Nick Bolton," replied Brady, fiercely. "We came here for freedom."

"To get away from Law and Order," remarked Merry Long, with a laugh.

"But we do need some one to take the command," said Frederic Allan. "Suppose you were to become our leader, Brady."

"Not with my consent," haughtily replied Nicholas. "Brady has courage enough, but no brains, — no, not brains enough to fill a nut-shell."

"Say that again if you dare!" exclaimed Brady, starting from the ground and doubling up his fists.

Nicholas rose, and saying, "Well, if you will fight, take it then!" gave Mark such a blow on the head as made him reel for a moment. Just as he recovered himself, and was about to return the blow, there came a vivid flash of lightning, followed almost instantaneously by a tremendous clap of thunder.

Horrible it was to see the angry, distorted faces of the combatants, as revealed by the lightning. They were startled for an instant, but not appeased. Mark raised his hand again for another blow. As he did so, the lightning came, with a burst of thunder at the same instant, so loud and dreadful that the boys all fell to the ground.

A large tree just by them had been shivered and splintered by the stroke. The rain immediately fell in torrents. The boys recovered from the shock, and fled dismayed to the tent. There they cowered together, trembling and weeping.

The storm howled around them like demon voices, and the thunder shook the earth upon which they lay. Conscience,

that truth-telling accuser, which sometimes remains silent or unheeded, now did its office.

Merry Long clung closely to Fred Allan, and whispered in his ear, "I am afraid to die, — I am so wicked."

"So am I," replied Allan; "let us say our prayers."

"Did not somebody speak of prayers," said Nicholas; "we had better pray, for there never was such a storm since the deluge."

"And who but old Nick tempted us here to enjoy it?" bitterly replied Mark Brady.

"Forgive me, Mark; forgive me, all of you. I did very wrong."

The voice of Nicholas trembled, and the tears gushed from his eyes, as he thus humbly asked forgiveness.

Put Holley had been so overcome by weariness that he fell into a profound sleep, from which he now awoke, so stiff and lame that he could not turn himself over.

"Strike a light! strike a light!" he exclaimed. "I am dying! I am dying!"

"We have no means of striking a light, my dear fellow," said Nicholas.

Then came a peal of thunder, so loud and long that it seemed the blast of the last trumpet.

"O gracious goodness! I shall die! I shall die!" continued Holley. "I wish I could pray; but I am in such agony that I cannot think what to say. Will not somebody pray?"

"Frederic Allan, you are the best among us; please say the Lord's prayer, will you?" asked Nicholas.

Allan fell upon his knees and fervently repeated, "Our Father which art in heaven," &c., and then, most earnestly, from the very depth of his soul, cried, "God be merciful to me a sinner!"

All the boys reverently joined, and when the petitions were uttered, they were somewhat calmed. The storm subsided, but the rain still fell, and the thunder muttered in the distance. As they lay in their miserable tent, cold and trembling, drenched with rain, Memory was not, as described in the

Sailor-Boy's Dream, "half covered with flowers, showing every rose, but secreting the thorn." She did her office faithfully, but severely. The sins they had committed came vividly before them, — their ingratitude to their parents and teachers, — their disregard of the word of God, and contempt for his laws. Then came the recollection of their comfortable homes, contrasted with the miserable tent, and the hard earth for their resting-place, — the kindness of dear friends, — the tender love of a mother, — all these came rushing over their minds, subduing and softening them. There was not one among them who did not that night form good resolutions for the future.

The storm at length subsided, the night became still as death, and the wearied wanderers exchanged the realities of memory for the visions of sleep.

CHAPTER XII.



TWINGES OF CONSCIENCE.

It was a bright and beautiful morning ; the rain-drops glittered in the sun, birds were singing in the trees, and the serene sky bore no traces of the recent storm.

“What time is it, Percy Dobbs?” inquired Nicholas, starting up and rubbing his eyes.

“My watch has stopped. I forgot to wind it up yesterday. I wish we were within sound of the church-clock, that I might set it again. I am sure, if I ever get within reach of that sound, I shall never desire to go out of it again.”

“There is one comfort, Percy, — all our spare clothing has been kept dry ; we can

make our toilettes in our Sunday best, and put our wet clothes in the sun and by the fire to dry.

"And what are you going to do about breakfast?" muttered Put Holley.

"I am glad you have an appetite this morning. It is a good sign," said Nicholas, laughing.

"I think it is a misfortune when there is nothing to eat," grumbled Holley.

"Plenty of nuts blown off by the wind," said Nicholas, cheerfully, "and birds and squirrels to shoot."

The other boys, all but Holley, soon followed Nicholas out of the tent. A disconsolate-looking set they were; as unlike the neat, trim, young gentlemen who started from Mr. Manley's, as a shattered, dismasted ship after a storm is to the full-rigged, gay vessel that sailed out of port.

But they washed in the brook, put on their "Sunday clothes," and looked like themselves again.

Nicholas was overflowing with kindness and good humor. He it was who collected

the wood and made the fire. He gathered chestnuts under the trees and put them in the kettle to boil, for Put Holley.

"Come, Mark Brady, let us shake hands and be friends. There is plenty of game now; we will go and shoot some for breakfast," said he. "You shall be our captain."

"I wish to start for Nut Hill and beg Mr. Manley's pardon as soon as possible," remarked Frederic Allan.

"But you surely would not be so unkind as to leave us, when poor Holley is unable to walk?"

"I suppose, then, we must stay till to-morrow," was the reluctant reply.

"Must we stay another day? What shall I do? If I only had a glass to drink out of, and a toothbrush!" — exclaimed Percy Dobbs.

"And your silver fork," said Mark Brady, laughing.

"Yes, Sir; and my silver fork, Sir. I am no admirer of brutish, savage life."

"Well, you shall have my gold pen to pick out your nuts with, this morning,"

continued Mark, throwing him the gold pen, in its handsome case.

The merry laugh that followed put the boys once more into good humor.

"Come, Nicholas, we will give these fellows as nice a steak for dinner as they ever tasted," and Mark shouldered the gun.

"And I will go with you," said Merry Long.

"No, you shall not," replied Mark.

"But I will."

"I am the captain now, — Nicholas says so, — and I command you to stay, or I shall fire upon you," continued Mark, pointing the gun at the frightened boy.

"No, no, Captain Brady, you would not do that," gently interposed Nicholas. "But Merry, my good friend, there is enough to do here. Gather wood and keep up the fire. We shall soon have a delicious breakfast for you."

"Exactly so ; go to work," added Mark.

Merry went sulkily back, and Mark and Nicholas pursued their way into the woods.

"I did not come here to work," said Per-

cy Dobbs, as soon as they were out of hearing. "I will not drag wood, and tear my new coat and pantaloons." And he spread a handkerchief over a stone, and then sat up as stiff as a poker.

"I will help you, Merry," said Frederic Allan, kindly. "Since we must remain for a day longer, we will make ourselves as comfortable as possible. Let us bring poor Holley out of the tent, and place him before the fire. Then we will change his clothing, and if he feels stiff and sore, we can make him some warm herb-drink."

"So we will," replied Merry.

"How are you, Put?" inquired Frederic, putting his head into the tent.

"Very sore and stiff."

"Well, we are going to take you into the pleasant air, close by the fire."

They kindly and tenderly helped the sufferer, as Frederic proposed.

The pennyroyal for the herb-drink grew near. It was made into a tea, and never was the best hyson so much relished and enjoyed as this tea, drank out of a cigar-case

which happened to be found in Holley's carpet-bag.

"I am better," said Holley, "much better," after he had become thoroughly warmed. "Do you think we shall be able to start for home to-morrow?"

"Home! you mean Mr. Manley's."

"No; I mean my own home. I want to see my mother."

"We had much better go back to our sweet, comfortable home at Nut Hill, and become reconciled to our dear, kind Mr. Manley and his wife," said Frederic Allan.

"So I think," added Percy Dobbs.

"I should not dare to go back to school, — I shall steer straight for my own home when we get out of the woods," said Merry Long, — "my own, my real home, where my mother will be so glad to see me that she will forgive me at once."

"I wish I could as easily obtain my mother's forgiveness," said Frederic, with a deep sigh.

"I thought your mother was dead."

"That is the very reason her forgiveness

cannot reach me," said Frederic, sorrowfully.

"When it thundered and lightened so dreadfully in the night, I could not help thinking of the cake and sweetmeats I had stolen from my mother," whispered Holley, casting a frightened glance over his shoulder, "and of a poor little bound girl, who used to be whipped for my faults. When the lightning glared so fearfully into the tent, I saw the ghost of the poor, pale child in one corner, making up faces at me. O, it was frightful! I remembered, too, how I used to torment her, and then deny it stoutly; and my poor, dear mother believed me when I told her lies; and so she punished the innocent. When I thought I was dying, that was the remembrance that gave me so much pain."

"Thus conscience makes cowards of us all," repeated Allan, partly to himself.

"Cowards! I am no coward now that it is broad daylight," stoutly replied Holley.

"So, doubtless, older folks than we have

thought, after a night of agony and repentance. Would it not be pleasant, — delightful, — if we could so live as to be no more afraid by night than by day, no more afraid amid storm and thunder and lightning than in this calm, sweet sunshine?" said Allan.

"Yes, that it would," replied Merry Long.

"Why cannot we do so."

"Because we have broken God's laws and fear the penalty."

"I do not quite understand you, Fred," replied Percy.

"God's laws are made for our good, and we cannot break them without suffering in some way as the consequence. A law would have no force unless there were a penalty or punishment for breaking it. The laws that men make are for our good, too. If we break them, we are not so certain of punishment; yet it generally follows, either directly or indirectly."

"You astonish me, Fred Allan!" exclaimed Percy Dobbs.

"And me too," added Merry Long.

"How could a boy of your uncommon sense

and learning be led into such a scrape as this?"

"Because I had not courage to do right. If we ever get back to Mr. Manley's, as I fervently hope we may, I shall take Law and Order for the motto of my future life, and endeavour, with God's help, to adhere to them faithfully."

There was here a pause of some minutes. Frederic continued, — "But let us now clear out the tent, and then we will collect leaves and branches, and make it more comfortable for the night."

Merry and Frederic then went to work cheerfully. They walked a short distance, and came to the tree that had been shivered by the lightning.

"This is all prepared for our fire," said Merry.

"But what a mercy that our lives are spared!" exclaimed Frederic. "Supposing our companions are not willing to leave to-morrow morning, will you go with me?"

"I should be afraid to leave them."

"You ought to be more afraid to stay. The sooner we get back, the better."

“ Well, I will think about it.”

“ But you must decide now ; we may not have another opportunity. Do let us begin to do our duty, and we shall no doubt have the blessing of God upon our endeavours.”

“ I will go with you,” was Merry’s reply.

Just then they heard the shouts of Nicholas and Mark, and hastened to the campus.

CHAPTER XIII.

SQUIRRELS AND WOODCOCKS.

THIS time, the hunters had not been unsuccessful. They brought a bunch of squirrels, some small birds, and half a dozen woodcocks.

"Now we will have a genuine Gypsy stew, such as we read of in English story-books," said Nicholas. "Pick the birds, skin the squirrels, and get ready. Merry Long, you are the best cook, and you discovered the kettle; we will leave you to preside over it when we have got the materials all ready. But," continued Nicholas, "I have not shown you all our treasures," and he drew from a bag he had carried with him some ears of green corn.

"Delicious," exclaimed Put Holley.

"You have recovered amazingly since we left, Put," said Mark Brady.

"I have, to be sure. A good fire and a quantity of pennyroyal tea have almost cured me. But where is the bear's meat that you promised to bring?"

Nicholas burst into an immoderate fit of laughter, in which Mark, after looking a little displeased for a moment, cordially joined.

"Your horrid black bear, Put, was nothing but the stump of a tree. The two bullets were safely lodged in it. The dozen other bears were two similar stumps, behind the one that Mark killed."

The boys now all joined in the laugh.

"I went to the top of a hill," continued Nicholas, "and there I saw that we were only five or six miles from a village. So when we want any thing we can send out delegates to make purchases."

"But do you not intend to start for Nut Hill, to-morrow?" inquired Frederic.

"No, indeed; not so long as we can find such game as this in the woods. What say you, Captain Brady?"

"I shall not think of such a thing for a week to come ; we might as well die for an old sheep as a lamb."

Frederic looked earnestly at Merry Long, but he was by this time so much engrossed with the cooking of the stew, that he did not notice the inquiring look.

The stew was at length completed, and the corn nicely roasted.

The miscellaneous contents of the stew, prepared as they had been before their eyes, would have disgusted the least fastidious at home. But now their appetites were so sharpened by long waiting, (for it was twelve o'clock before their breakfast was ready,) that they ate with the keenest relish. But the manner of eating ! It would have disgusted Turks themselves, for they learn by long experience to carry their food, gravy and all, in their hands, to their mouths. Not so with these inexperienced school-boys. They almost scalded their hands, while fishing out the bits of squirrel or bird, whichever they might chance to snatch from the kettle, and the gravy or broth

streamed down their hands and over their clothes, while the grease from the bones, as they gnawed them, spread from ear to ear.

Percy Dobbs shuddered with horror as he held up his hands after the meal was over, and exclaimed, "O for a napkin, — a napkin!"

When they had fully satisfied their appetites, there still remained something for the evening meal.

"Now let us gather nuts to roast ; for to-night we must have a right-down jollification," said Nicholas. "We will have a quantity of branches piled against the sides of the tent to keep out the night air, and we will build up a glorious fire to make it look cheerful in the campus. To-morrow morning early, we will go out and shoot woodcock. I know where we can find hundreds of them."

"Let me see, what day is it?" said Mertry Long. "I really have forgotten."

"Monday night we left Nut Hill, — Tuesday we came to this place ; Wednesday and Wednesday night, — it is only Thursday," replied Mark Brady.

"It seems to me a whole month," was Percy Dobbs's reply.

"And only two more days to Sunday," remarked Frederic Allan, soberly.

"Yes; we will have a day of rest then. You shall be our parson, Fred, and preach us a sermon," lightly replied Nicholas, who seemed to have quite forgotten the good resolutions of the preceding night.

CHAPTER XIV.



FREDERIC ALLAN'S STORY.

THE pale new-moon showed her crescent in the west, — then came the stars,

“One by one, upon the shady sky.”

The boys sat around the fire. They told funny stories, sang lively songs, and played merry games. Suddenly, they were disturbed by a low, prolonged sound in the distance.

“What is it?” exclaimed three or four at once.

“The howl of a wolf, it must be,” said Merry Long.

“Well, there is no danger so long as we keep up a bright fire. I was just going to

propose that we should all relate our own histories, or biographies. Suppose you begin, Percy Dobbs?"

"I have no history to relate. I was born a gentleman, brought up a gentleman, and lived like a gentleman until you, Nicholas Bolton, tempted me to lead the life of a savage."

"Well, you are quite savage one way, at least. Frederic Allan, will you favor us with your story?"

"My autobiography?" replied Allan, smiling sadly. "It may be told in a few words. I was left an orphan when only eight years old. I have a perfect recollection of my father and mother, — the kindest and best of parents. I remember, too, a nice old grandmother, who used to sit in a large easy-chair, by the side of the fireplace. But she died two or three years before my father and mother.

"I was a disobedient boy. Too well do I remember the sweet, sorrowful countenance of my mother, as she reproved me for pulling out grandmother's knitting-needles from

her work. After the good old lady died, I was very sorry, for I had tormented her in various ways, and I promised ever after to be a good, obedient boy. But I did not keep my promise, and my mother often shed tears over me as she punished me, her only son. It is a bitter recollection, and the older I grow, the more it haunts me. My father died first; then, my mother became very ill. She told me one day when I went in to see her, not to go out of the house that day, for she wished me to be where I could hear immediately if I were called. She extended her white, thin hand towards me, but I was angry, and pretended not to notice it. She said, 'Come and kiss me, my own darling'; but I walked out of the room, and, taking up my hat, ran out of the house, and did not stop till I reached the village green, where I met some boys, with whom I wanted to play marbles. I stayed, and had two or three games, and then ran home. When I got to the door, my heart misgave me; I was sorry I had done wrong, and had made up my mind to say so to my dear

mother. I went in; the house was all silent. I went to my mother's room; they were just closing her eyes. She was dead!"

Frederic paused. It was some time before his feelings would allow him to proceed. At length he resumed his story.

"They tore me from the lifeless corpse of my mother. How cruel and indifferent every body seemed! There was none to love 'poor, little Freddy,'—as my sainted mother used to call me. O, could I only know that she had forgiven me!"

"But you were so young," remarked Merry Long, "so very young."

"I was old enough to have known and to have done better. That last act of disobedience will haunt me to my dying day."

"I would not let it do so," said Mark Brady. "You have plenty of money, and more talents than all of us together."

"And who earned the money which I now possess? That father whom I disobeyed. Who instructed me early, and gave the intellectual bias which has de-

terminated my future career? That sweet mother, to whom I was so unkind. I had just begun to enjoy a little peace and satisfaction at Mr. Manley's. I was winning the affection of good Mrs. Manley; for her sake I governed my temper, and conquered my stubborn will. But, alas! I yielded to temptation, for want of courage to resist it, and here I am, bitterly repenting the false step I have taken."

"Come, come, Fred, you take it too much to heart," said Merry Long. "Here we are, and we had better enjoy ourselves while we can. I don't care a fig for the little squabbles I have had with my mother, and as for Manley, when we get over our frolic we will be as humble as sheep, and go back and make up for lost time by studying ten times harder than before."

"And start to-night," whispered Frederic in Merry's ear.

The only reply was a decided shake of the head, which spoke the negative as plainly as words could have done.

"Come, Captain Brady, let us have your

story," said Nicholas; "we want something to drive away the effects of Allan's too-sorrowful account of himself."

Mark looked very consequential and said, — "Listen to my story. Myself and nine other boys have squabbled along ever since I can remember. My father is as ignorant as one of his own cart-horses, and my mother don't know any more than a cart-wheel. But they are rich, very rich, and they have sent me to school ever since I can remember, to acquire that learning which they themselves need. I have been at home only during vacations for ten years. When there, I am mortified to death by the vulgarity of the old codger and his dowdy wife."

"Shame! shame!" exclaimed Merry.

"Ashamed of the parents who are giving you the means for a good education!" said Frederic Allan, with pious horror.

"How can I help it?" asked Brady, sulkily.

"Are they not your best and kindest friends? Have you not been commanded to honor and obey them?"

“You need not preach, Fred Allan, what you have found it so hard to practise. But to my story. I suppose you have observed that my face is ornamented with as many lines and cross-lines as a map of New York city. These beautiful marks were made by the hands of my brothers, just for diversion during our vacations. One comfort I have, — I have left as many of my own marks on their ugly faces, — marks that they will carry to their graves. Mark Brady never submits to insult.”

By this time some of the boys were nodding, and all looked very sleepy.

“We must be stirring early in the morning. Suppose we heap up wood on the fire and go to bed,” said Nicholas.

To this they all assented, and, creeping into the tent, they drew the branch that served as a door, over the entrance.

CHAPTER XV.

FIRE IN THE WOODS.

ABOUT midnight Nicholas awoke, almost suffocated with smoke. The tent was on fire. He uttered a loud, piercing cry, which awoke his companions, but so stupefied and stifled were they, that it was some time before they could be aroused to a sense of their danger. Mark Brady led out Put Holley with difficulty, and when at length the three stood without the burning tent, they saw that three others were missing.

The heap of brush-wood at the entrance was on fire. Nicholas threw aside the blazing branches, and, seizing hold of Merry Long, dragged him out. His clothes were already on fire. They rolled him on the

ground, and extinguished them. The cross-pole, with all the covering of the tent, now fell in, and blazed up fiercely.

"Fred Allan! Percy Dobbs!" screamed Nicholas; "for mercy's sake, answer me."

But no answer came from the burning mass. The blazing materials of the tent and its contents lay before them. The dried leaves upon the ground had caught, and the fire ran along in every direction.

"We must escape for our lives," said Nicholas. "See! the woods are on fire!"

Extreme terror enabled them to fly to the other side of the campus.

"The wind drives the flames that way; we must press forward in this direction," continued Nicholas, urging forward the two younger boys.

"I cannot go a step farther," said Merry Long, sinking down upon the ground.

"My feet! my feet!"

"Are they burned?"

"Dreadfully! dreadfully!"

And truly, the poor boy was in a pitiable condition. His coat and stockings hung

about him in rags; he was without a cap or hat; his hair was completely burnt off his head, and his face was blackened and burnt.

“What can be done! what can be done! The fire is increasing; we are not safe here!” exclaimed Nicholas, seizing Merry and dragging him along, while Mark assisted Holley.

The wind increased; the fire roared and raged fearfully. Black columns of smoke rolled up into the sky, and trees fell with a tremendous crash.

“This way! this way!” shouted Nicholas, as he hurried along, dragging his companion.

The light of the fire enabled him to see the footpath which he had taken the day before. They had not advanced far before Merry Long cried out, — “Leave me! leave me to die!”

The agony he endured was intense.

“I cannot go a step farther,” said Holley, sinking down beside him.

Nicholas now, for the first time, per-

ceived that his own hands were badly burnt.

"This path must lead to the village that we saw yesterday. Try to go a little farther, and I will then run on for help from the village."

"No, no ; do not leave us, I implore you," said Holley.

A lurid light penetrated even through the thick woods.

"Don't you see the fire is spreading? It is not safe to linger here."

"I do not see the light ; it is totally dark," replied Mark.

"No, it is not ; I see you distinctly," said Holley.

"Then I cannot open my eyes. O, no ! I cannot !" exclaimed Mark, raising his hand to his eyes.

A piece of burning wood had fallen across the lids, and they were now so swollen that the poor fellow could not raise them.

"Take Merry Long upon your back Mark, and follow me," said Nicholas, whose hands were now so painful that he could not use them.

The dreadful roaring of the fire led them to believe that it was rapidly approaching. Nicholas took off his own coat, put it upon Merry Long, and assisted him to mount upon the back of Mark Brady. He then urged them forward as rapidly as he possibly could, but it seemed to his impatience as if they went at a snail's pace. After they had gone stumbling on in this manner for about a quarter of a mile into the woods, Merry said, — "Put me down, and let me die here ; I cannot hold on any longer."

"Can you see where you are going, Nicholas?" inquired Mark, in a sorrowful voice, so different from his own, that it sounded like the voice of an entire stranger.

"Who was it that spoke?" exclaimed Nicholas, trembling with terror.

"It was I, Nicholas," said Mark. "I cannot see you ; where are you?"

"Here I am. Is it you, Mark? O, I thought it was an accusing spirit from the other world that addressed me," replied Nicholas, who had sunk down upon his knees, overcome with fear and agony.

"Fred Allan! dear Fred Allan! If he were only with us, he could pray for us," said Merry Long, who now lay upon the ground.

The others sat near him and sobbed aloud. Prayer went up to God from every heart.

"Poor Fred Allan, and Percy, too! we shall never see them again," said Merry Long, after a pause of some moments. "If I had only followed Allan's good advice, I should have saved his life and my own. Nicholas, tell Mr. Manley how I repented before I died, and ask him to forgive me."

The suffering boy groaned aloud, and no one had a consolatory word to offer.

"O my poor, dear mother!" he exclaimed in agony.

This was too much. Their own distant homes came vividly before them; friends dearly loved, but often unkindly treated, were now sadly remembered. What a paradise seemed their sweet home at Nut Hill, and how kind and affectionate Mr. and Mrs. Manley!

The dark, windy night was around the unsheltered boys. Every gust made them thrill with agony. But wearied and worn out with suffering, they at last slept, — all but Nicholas. The pain in his hands was intense; but the more intense agony of remorse was preying at his heart.

“O God!” he exclaimed, from the depth of his agitated soul; “O God! bring us safely out of trouble, and I will serve thee faithfully all the days of my life.”

The half-hour that passed while his companions slept seemed to him an age of misery. “I have brought all this upon myself and these poor boys,” thought he. “I, who have so often been called a good-hearted fellow, — nobody’s enemy but my own. Little did they know how wicked this heart has been.”

Then came the dreadful thought, “How shall I ever be able to tell Mr. Manley of the terrible fate of Frederic and Percy?”

A feeble moan from Merry Long attracted his attention.

“What is it, Merry? Can I do any thing for you?”

“Give me some water ! O, give me a drop of water !” he replied, opening his parched lips and rolling his tongue about his hot, fevered mouth.

“I will go and try to find some help for you. Stay here, all of you, till I come back.”

“But, Nicholas, you know I am blind ; how can I ever find the way out of the woods without you ?” said Mark Brady, with that fearful tone of sorrow which had before so startled Nicholas.

“Mark, my dear fellow, I will bring help to you or perish in the attempt,” exclaimed Nicholas.

“Farewell !” said Merry Long ; “I shall not live to see you again. Send my love to my poor mother.”

CHAPTER XVI.



THE ESCAPE.

THE night of the fire, Frederic Allan lay nearest the entrance ; next to him was Percy Dobbs.

“ Do not go to sleep, Percy,” whispered Frederic in his ear.

“ Why not ? ”

“ I will tell you when the others are all asleep. Lie perfectly still.”

But the boys were restless and unquiet upon their hard bed. It was a long time before their regular breathing gave evidence that they were in the land of dreams.

“ Will you go with me, Percy,” whispered Frederic ; “ if you will, we will start immediately.”

"I am afraid to go through the woods without more of us together."

"There is no more danger than there is in sleeping here. What protection have we now? It is better for us to do what is right."

Here Put Holley muttered in his sleep, — "I am sure I studied my grammar lesson."

"Poor fellow!" again whispered Frederic. "How much better it would be for him if he had studied in our pleasant school-room, and gone from it to his comfortable bed!"

"O, would it not be delightful!" responded Percy.

"Then let us creep out carefully," continued Frederic. "Here is your carpet-bag, and my valise."

Stealthily and slowly they removed the branch of the tree, and, without disturbing the sleepers within, replaced it. The fire blazed brightly, and shed its flickering light upon the trees that surrounded the campus.

"How shall we know our way?" asked Percy, as they were about to enter the wood.

"The stars will be our guide. I have been watching them to-night. There is the polar star; and there, peeping through the trees, is the Great Bear."

"A great bear, did you say? Where? where?"

"Don't be frightened, Percy. The constellation Ursa Major, I mean. Since Mark Brady's black bear turned out to be only a stump, we need not terrify ourselves by imagining wild beasts in the woods."

The dry leaves rustled under their feet at every tread, and the wind sighed through the solemn woods. The path was so narrow that only now and then could they catch a glimpse of a single twinkling star. Groping along in the darkness, they pursued their doubtful way. But their hearts grew lighter at every step; they were following the dictates of conscience, — going back to duty and the comforts of home. They kept on their course, through the narrow path in the woods, for more than an hour, without stopping.

"I am so tired that I must rest awhile,"

said Percy, at last, throwing down his carpet-bag, and placing himself on the ground beside it.

"I am afraid you will go to sleep, Percy; we had better press forward," urged Frederic.

"I cannot go a step farther to-night," was the reply of the weary boy, already nodding.

Just then a distant clock struck *one*. It sounded solemnly through the dark woods, and yet it was cheering and animating to the wanderers.

Percy started to his feet, exclaiming, "That is the most joyful sound that I ever heard in my life."

"It is indeed a joyful sound; it tells of our nearness to Christian people. Let us thank God." Frederic fell upon his knees, Percy followed his example, and a few moments were passed in silent prayer.

"Now let us press onward," said Frederic, "I think the path grows wider." And it was so; for hitherto it had been only a footpath, now it was the road made by the

carts that came for loads of wood. The boys now walked on side by side, and arm in arm.

"How we shall look when we get to the village!" exclaimed Percy; "so dirty and slovenly! I hope we shall have a chance to wash ourselves and put on clean linen before any body sees us."

Frederic smiled at this proof of his companion's ruling passion, but he kindly replied, — "Neatness is an excellent thing; I have heard some one say that it was next to the cardinal virtues."

"Is it not horrid to live in the filthy, abominable manner we have done for three days past? No one ever need talk to me of the pleasures of savage life, or the comforts of the backwoodsman, after this."

"No; nor of the pleasure of being our own masters. How much happier we were under the control of superior minds!"

"I am afraid to meet Mr. Manley."

"How could we be betrayed into such a ridiculous affair as this! It is perfectly amazing. You say, Percy, that you are

afraid to meet Mr. Manley ; I am not. Here, in the darkness of the night, where no human eye is upon us, I feel the presence of the Supreme Being, and rejoice in it. I am not afraid now ; but I was the night of that dreadful thunder-storm. I trust I have sincerely repented, and been forgiven for Christ's sake, and now I feel at peace. Let us both choose Him, who now sees us, for the guide of our youth, and our portion for ever."

"I have never thought so seriously of these matters before," said Percy.

"Well, we will remember this solemn night all our lives, and consider it the turning-point from the path of evil to that of duty, and, may I not add, holiness? There is something very striking to me in that expression, 'the beauty of holiness.'"

They now emerged from the woods. The clear heavens shone with myriads of stars. A breathless stillness prevailed. The boys leaned, for a moment, upon a rail-fence by a high-road, and raising their eyes to the sublime sky above them, were filled with solemn awe.

The clock, clear and full, sounded out *two*. They started, jumped over the fence, and found they were quite near to the village. A solitary light from a distant window shone bright and cheerfully, like "a good deed in a naughty world."

They pressed forward, and soon were in front of the church. It seemed to have been recently built, for it was a small Gothic edifice, with an open porch in front.

"We will take shelter in the porch for the rest of the night," said Allan.

"Are you not afraid, so near the churchyard?" asked Percy, shuddering.

"I am more afraid of the living than the dead; but to-night I fear neither."

So saying, Frederic threw down his carpet-bag for a pillow, commended himself to the care of his Heavenly Father, and was soon fast asleep. Percy immediately followed his example.

CHAPTER XVII.



ETTA HALLOV

THE sun was shining brightly into the open porch, when Frederic and Percy awoke. A sweet little girl, apparently twelve or thirteen years old, stood looking anxiously at them. In one hand she held a pretty basket filled with warm biscuit, and in the other, a pitcher of milk.

Frederic Allan started up, wondering much where he was, and rubbing his eyes to know whether he were still dreaming or awake.

Percy, too, started up, and, as the most natural thing for him, began brushing the dust from his coat. Then, seeing the little girl, he made his very best bow, and awkwardly said, — “How do you do, ma’am.”

Frederic could scarcely forbear smiling at this flourish from his friend. "Where are we, Miss?" he inquired of the stranger, who still stood with her sweet, blue eyes intently fixed upon them.

"In the porch of our church," she replied.

"Excuse me, what town or village is this?"

"Brenton, — I did not understand you."

"You look like a good angel, come to bring us food and drink," said Percy, with another bow, to execute which he took off his black velvet cap, and held it in his hand.

"I am no angel," said the little stranger, with a bright smile, "but I have come to bring you some breakfast."

"We are very tired and hungry," said Frederic, taking the basket, while Percy took the pitcher from her hand; "but how did you know that we so much needed this kindness?"

"My father is the clergyman of this parish; he saw you here early this morning,

and said you looked pale and weary. Mamma proposed to send you some breakfast, and I begged to bring it to you, as papa had to go immediately to visit a sick parishioner, two miles off."

Here the little stranger seated herself upon the lowest step of the porch, with her back turned to the boys, that they might not be embarrassed while partaking of the breakfast she had brought. Never was milk so refreshing, never was biscuit so delicious,—at least, so thought the hungry boys.

"To whom are we indebted for this very great kindness?" asked Frederic, as he handed back the empty pitcher and basket.

"The Rev. Mr. Hallowday is my father's name."

"And will you show us the way to your father's house, Miss Hallowday?" said Frederic.

"Certainly," said the young girl, coloring up at hearing herself, for the first time, called Miss Hallowday.

While taking his breakfast, Frederic had

formed a resolution to ask the advice and assistance of the clergyman, and now hastened to put it in execution.

As Etta, — for that was her name, — as Etta tripped along, Allan asked her how far distant ——ville was from Brenton.

“A great many miles; I do not know how many. You are two of the boys who left Mr. Manley’s last Monday night. Where are the other four?” said Etta, laughing.

“How did you know any thing about us?” inquired Percy, with wonder.

“You are Percy Dobbs, and this must be *Mr. Frederic Allan.*”

Great was the astonishment of both the boys at this startling announcement.

“It is very strange that you should know us, Miss Hallowday,” said Percy, “for I should not know myself in such shabby, dirty-looking clothing.”

“It was not very wonderful that I should know you, after reading such a particular description as that,” said Etta, pointing to a handbill stuck upon a tree.

"One Hundred Dollars Reward !

"Six boys from the school of Mr. Manley, Nut Hill, ——ville, are missing. They probably have wandered farther from their late place of residence than they intended, and are unable to discover the way home. Any person who can give information which will lead to the restoration of the boys to Nut Hill will receive the above reward, and exceedingly oblige their afflicted friend,

"ARCHIBALD MANLEY."

Then followed a particular description of each of the boys.

"Good, kind Mr. Manley!" exclaimed Allan, his eyes filling with tears, which he hastily brushed away. "So gently he mentions our departure, as if it were accidental!"

They now approached the house of Mr. Hallowday.

"Come in," said Etta, "mamma will be very happy to see you."

She showed them into a neat little parlour, and then went to call her mother.

Percy Dobbs walked up to the mirror, and looked at himself with extreme mortification. His coat was torn in several places ; his linen soiled ; his hair tangled ; his face and hands intolerably dirty.

"What a fright !" exclaimed he, taking off his cap, and running a pocket-comb through his long hair.

Mrs. Hallowday entered the parlour with a smile. "So you are, indeed, two of the runaways from Nut Hill. Etta has been telling me about the handbill. Mr. Hallowday had not seen it when he left this morning. He thought you were two homeless foreigners. Where are your companions ?"

"We left them sleeping in the tent which we made in the woods. I did not know that we were thus publicly advertised, when I proposed to come to your house," said Frederic, with the color mounting to his temples. "I came for the purpose of confessing who we were, and of asking Mr. Hallowday's advice."

"He will be home soon. In the mean

time, let me show you to a room where you can arrange your dress and make yourselves comfortable."

With many thanks, the boys followed Mrs. Hallowday to the neat bedroom.

"When you have performed your ablutions," said she, "you had better take a comfortable nap."

"How sweet and nice!" whispered Percy, about half an hour after, as he was falling into a quiet sleep.

CHAPTER XVIII.



SEEKING THE LOST.

REFRESHED by their comfortable nap, Frederic and Percy gladly accepted an invitation to come down stairs to luncheon. A little table was spread for four persons. The biscuit, though cold, had not lost the delicate relish which had gratified their morning appetite, and the cake seemed wonderfully nice.

When the boys had enjoyed the luncheon, Frederic asked Mrs. Hallowday the distance from Brenton to Nut Hill, adding that he and his companion wished to start immediately.

"I do not know," she replied; "but here comes Mr. Hallowday, he will tell you."

A tall, dignified man, with a benevolent countenance, entered the apartment. He looked at the strangers, without recognizing them at first as the same that he had seen in the porch.

"Master Frederic Allan," said Mrs. Hallowday; "I have forgotten the name of your friend."

"Percy Dobbs."

"Two of the boys from Mr. Manley's," said Mr. Hallowday, with surprise. He had been reading the handbill.

"We are, Sir," said Frederic, looking very much ashamed, "and we wish to know how we can get back as quickly as possible to Nut Hill."

"But where are the other four?"

"In the woods. I should think about six or eight miles from this place."

"In the woods!" exclaimed Mr. Hallowday. "The woods are on fire. Which way did you come?"

Mr. Hallowday walked rapidly to the door, followed by all the rest. Frederic looked for the church, and then pointed in

the direction from which Percy and himself had come. Dark volumes of smoke ascended from the woods.

"We must go for them immediately. Had you a fire?"

"We left a large fire blazing before the tent, on the campus. Do let us go at once," said Frederic.

"But you are too tired to go," said Etta, as her father left to order horses and wagons.

"No, I am not. I may be of some assistance. Come, Percy, get your cap."

Percy looked as though he should prefer to stay in the comfortable quarters where they were, but was ashamed to confess it.

In a very short time Mr. Hallowday returned. Three of his parishioners, with two large wagons, were with him. "Please write to Mr. Manley, Mrs. Hallowday, that two of the boys are safe with us, and we hope to have the other runaways before night. Put up what you think we may need, and let us be off."

CHAPTER XIX.

A SURPRISE.

MR. HALLOWDAY, guided by Frederic, took the path to the woods, by which he and Percy had come to the village. They jolted over the rough cart-path for three miles; then they were obliged to get out of the wagons and take the footpath. Mr. Hallowday led the way with rapid strides. He had not gone far, before he stumbled over some obstruction.

It was Nicholas, who had fallen across the path and fainted. The good man lifted up the poor boy, and with the aid of one of the men, carried him back, and placed him in a wagon.

They sprinkled cold water in his face,

while Frederic held one of the poor, burnt hands, and Percy the other. It was not long before Nicholas began to recover. He opened his eyes and looked wildly at Frederic, and then at Percy.

"Frederic Allan, am I in heaven?" said he.

"No, Nicholas, you are still on earth," replied Frederic, tenderly, with the tears streaming down his cheeks.

"I thought you had gone there," said Nicholas; "but there are no tears in heaven."

"Where are the other boys?" asked Frederic, eagerly.

"O, the other boys! I remember now. Go to them! Fly to them! Burnt, and perhaps dead!"

Mr. Hallowday and two men were already hurrying forward.

"Percy, stay with Nicholas. Bind up his poor hands, and give him some wine and water. I will go with Mr. Hallowday," said Frederic.

"We will take good care of the poor fellow," said the man who was left with the wagons.

Frederic now hurried forward after Mr. Hallowday. They had made their way through the woods for more than a mile, hearing nothing but the roaring of the distant fire, when they were startled by a loud groan.

They stopped and listened. A cry of distress, shrill and piercing, came from the woods on the left. One of the men who had provided himself with an axe cut away the bushes and lower limbs of the evergreens, and made his way for about twenty yards.

There lay Putnam Holley. He had crept thus far on his hands and feet, and having missed the path, and being completely exhausted, could go no farther. The man took him up, and carried him to Mr. Hallowday, telling him that friends had come to his rescue.

No sooner did he see Frederic Allan than he covered his eyes, and shrieked out, — “There is such a thing as ghosts, for I see one.”

“No, no, Put, real flesh and blood it is. Where are Mark and Merry?”

"I left them behind. The fire was within a few yards of them, and they could not move. O, hurry! hurry! They may be burnt up before this time."

No farther urgency was needed. One of the men went back with Holley to the wagons, while Mr. Hallowday, Frederic, and the third man pressed forward.

The fire soon came in sight. The smoke became so dense that it was almost smothering.

"We can go no farther," said the man.

"O, a little farther, — a little farther!" urged Frederic vehemently.

Mr. Hallowday and Frederic went on. The man stopped, saying, — "It is presumptuous to go a step farther."

"I hear voices! Courage, Merry! I hear voices!"

"That is Mark Brady. O Mark! where are you?" exclaimed Frederic.

"Gracious God! That is the sweet voice of Frederic Allan," said Mark, holding out his arms.

"Are you in the land of the living? I cannot see you."

"Here I am," said Frederic, throwing his arms around Mark's neck, and kissing his blackened face.

Mark was standing, leaning against a tree. His loss of sight alone prevented him from perceiving his imminent danger. The fire had actually advanced so near, that the heat was now becoming intense.

"There, Merry, I told you I would not leave you till help came."

Merry could not speak, but he stretched out his burnt arms towards Frederic.

"We will carry the wretched boy," said Mr. Hallowday, taking him up carefully.

"And you will lead me, Fred Allan. Had we only followed your good advice! Where is Percy?"

"Safe with Nicholas at the wagons, where we are taking you."

As they went along, Mark related to Frederic all that had happened since they left, and heard in return of his friends' escape, and reception at the house of Mr. Hallow-

CHAPTER XX.

FORGIVENESS.

MRS. HALLOWDAY and Etta had prepared every thing for the comfort of the runaways, should her good husband be so fortunate as to meet them. Little did she think, however, that they would be in the deplorable condition in which they actually were. It was after sunset before they arrived. Nicholas was the only one who could walk unassisted into the house. Frederic led in Mark Brady; Put Holley and Merry Long were carried in, and laid upon beds, with the greatest care.

No sooner had Holley found himself in a comfortable place than he said to Mrs. Hallowday, — “I hope they have some warm tea

ready, for I think it would do me good. I am not burnt, but so lame from a bad fall, and a cold I have taken since, that I could not walk."

"You shall have the warm tea immediately," said the kind-hearted lady, right glad to find that one of her guests was likely to recover.

The physician, who very soon arrived, pronounced Merry Long in great danger. It would be some days before it could be decided whether or not his burns would prove fatal.

Mark Brady's eyes were so much swollen, that he could not tell whether the injury done to them were confined to the lids, or would deprive him of sight.

Nicholas was the last to be attended to by the physician. His hands had been so badly burned that they were perfectly useless, and it was even doubtful whether he would ever have the use of them again.

That night there was but little sleep at the hospitable mansion of Mr. Hallowday. Late the next morning, Mr. and Mrs. Hal-

lowday and Etta, Frederic, Percy, Nicholas, and Mark, were assembled in the parlour for morning prayers.

Mr. Hallowday, in the most solemn manner, offered up a thanksgiving for the restoration of the wanderers, and an earnest petition for the recovery of the sick and suffering. He ended with commending them all to the mercy of God, entreating that they might henceforth walk in the ways of God's commandments, and be his faithful servants and followers, and at last come to his heavenly kingdom.

From the hearts of the penitents present came a deep "Amen!"

At the breakfast table, there were two helpless ones, — Nicholas and Mark.

"I will assist this young gentleman," said Etta, going to the side of Mark Brady.

It was trying, indeed, to Mark, to submit to being fed in this manner; less so, however, than if he could have witnessed the process.

Nicholas, who could not use his hands, was obliged to accept the same kind office

from Frederic Allan, and he could not help smiling at his own awkward attempts to catch the food from the fork as it approached his mouth, and to drink from the cup offered by another.

Mr. Hallowday, after breakfast, drew from the boys a full account of their departure from Nut Hill, and all that had passed since that unfortunate time.

"But was it not a pleasant home at Nut Hill?" asked Mr. Hallowday.

"It was a very delightful home," said Frederic Allan; "more truly a home to me than any I have seen since my childhood."

"Mr. Manley was a classmate of mine," continued the clergyman. "He had the first honor in our class, and delivered a most eloquent valedictory. I have not seen him since we parted on Commencement day. It is seldom that a man of such superior talents devotes himself to the task of educating boys of your age. It is his choice, for he might command any station in our country."

"He ought to be President of the United

States," said Nicholas. "I long to see him once more, to tell him how much I think of him, and to beg his forgiveness."

As he said this, Mr. Manley himself drove up to the door. He had received Mrs. Hallowday's letter the evening before, and had started from home in half an hour after its reception. By riding all night he had been able to reach Brenton thus unexpectedly.

Mr. Hallowday went out, and met his old friend most cordially.

"And where are my boys?" was the first question asked by Mr. Manley.

"Come in, and see them; a most penitent family, I assure you."

Nicholas hid his face with his wounded hands, and burst into tears. Percy made, as usual, a low bow. But Frederic Allan rushed into the arms of Mr. Manley, and whispered, — "O my dear friend, will you forgive me?"

"And what is the matter with you, Nicholas Bolton? Both hands bound up, and your face burnt!"

“Not a sufficient punishment for the harm I have done, Sir. I alone am to blame in this whole affair, and I will submit to any punishment you see fit to inflict. Only forgive me, and then lay on the stripes as heavily as you can.”

“We are all to blame,” said Mark, “and all must beg forgiveness.”

“But why are your eyes bandaged, Mark Brady? And what does all this mean?”

“You have not heard the worst yet,” said Mr. Hallowday. “Come into my study, and I will give you a brief account of the whole matter, and prepare you to see the most afflicted sufferer.”

The clergyman did as he had said, and soon Mr. Manley stood by the bedside of Merry Long.

“Is it you, my dear Mr. Manley?” said the apparently dying boy, in a voice scarcely articulate. “O, I am glad you are come, that I may ask your forgiveness!”

“You have it, freely. Forgiveness is never denied to the truly penitent.”

“And will you pray to God to forgive me, too? I have been very wicked.”

“Do you not expect to recover?” asked Mr. Hallowday, in a tremulous voice.

“I do not think I can; but if it please God, I should like to live, to be a good son to my dear mother. She will not know how to spare me.”

Fervent prayer was offered by Mr. Manley, as he knelt by the bedside.

Holley was not forgotten. He was sitting up, and as soon as he saw Mr. Manley he sprang from his chair and exclaimed, — “O dear, Mr. Manley! If you had only seen how we lived in the woods, you would pity us. Why, we never had a bit of bread, nor a cup of coffee, all the while we were there.”

CHAPTER XXI.

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE.

THREE months after the incidents related in the last chapter, five boys were sitting around the table in the school-room at Nut Hill. It was evening, and the hour for study was over, yet they lingered in the pleasant room. Mark Brady had a green shade over his eyes; for they were still weak. The eyelids only had been injured, and he was rapidly recovering his sight.

Nicholas Bolton sat next. He wore large gloves on his hands, and was obliged to depend upon his next neighbour, Frederic Allan, to turn over the leaves of the Iliad he was studying. His countenance had undergone a surprising change. A large scar on

his cheek somewhat marred the beauty of his features; but the expression of his fine face had greatly improved. It was pensive, subdued, and gentle,—more intellectual, though less spirited, than formerly.

Percy Dobbs was very little changed. His coat was as neatly brushed, his hair as scrupulously parted, and his teeth as white as ever. A close observer might have noticed that his manners were more kind and less artificial, and that he studied with more earnestness and success.

Holley sat with both elbows on the table, and his head resting in his hands.

Merry Long alone was missing.

“I do not like the *Iliad*,” said Nicholas.

“Why not?” asked Frederic, as he turned over a new leaf for his friend.

“Because the heroes were ruffians and robbers, disregarding Law and Order. They were savage warriors, delighting in revenge and blood.”

“Then you, of course, do not mean to be a soldier?”

“No, Frederic, unless I am permitted to become a soldier of the cross.”

"And do you really intend to be a clergyman?"

"If I am good enough for that sacred office."

"But you will disappoint the ambition of your father."

"I will hope that he may in time have a nobler ambition for his son."

"Well, I mean to be a lawyer," continued Frederic, "that I may plead the cause of the innocent, and maintain the rights of the oppressed."

"And I am going to be a merchant," said Mark Brady, "and when I have made money enough, I mean to establish an Institute for the Blind, on the plan of the Perkins Institute at Boston. Having suffered so much from loss of sight, I am resolved to do something to alleviate the condition of those who suffer from the same cause. Only think how kind my father and mother were to me the two months I was at home, deprived of sight. And how ungrateful I had been to them! The fact was, Frederic, when you spoke so tenderly and sadly of

your parents, that night in the campus, to drive the effects of it out of my mind I made out as bad a story as I could. I found my mother, though she does not know much about books, a very sensible, and, what is better, a very good woman; and my father is one of the most shrewd and wise practical men you ever saw."

"I am glad to hear you say so," replied Frederic. "I suppose because they did not happen to understand Latin and Greek, of which you had a smattering, you inferred that they were totally ignorant."

"Exactly so. And now, I care not a fig for Latin and Greek. I shall become an apprentice to my father, and learn from him how to make a good merchant."

"And you, Percy, — what are you going to be?" asked Frederic.

"What I have always been, — a gentleman."

"But do you not intend to have some profession?"

"Not exactly. I mean to be a gentleman of leisure, and an author."

"I suspect authors, if they are gentlemen of *leisure*, rarely become distinguished. It must require much study and a deal of hard thinking to write well," said Nicholas.

"You will see, then, if I do not become a distinguished author. Such is my intention," replied Percy Dobbs.

"And you, Put Holley, — what do you mean to be?"

"Professor of Chemistry in a college."

"Chemistry!" exclaimed the other four.

"Yes, chemistry! Because then I should know what all sorts of food are made of, and all liquids; and I should be able to detect poisons and a thousand other things. I could even analyze the composition of a mince-pie or a plum-cake."

"That you do very well now," said Nicholas, laughing; "but you can be a very good and useful man as a professor of chemistry. But you must study very hard for it, or you would never be elected to a professorship."

"I know one thing I would do, if I ever got to be a professor."

“What is that?”

“I would make the college boys study right hard, to pay for all the drudgery over books that I have had.”

“That would be doing them a great kindness. Do you not suppose poor Merry Long would be very glad to be with us here again, studying faithfully?”

“No doubt he would. They say he never will be able to walk a step again. And his kind mother is so devoted to him, that it almost makes him weep to look at her. I went to see him on my way back to Nut Hill. He is already very much improved in mind, and I should not be surprised if he should, indeed, become a distinguished author. Books and study will now be his only resource. And what a mercy it is that he has a taste for them,” added Nicholas Bolton. “O, I shall never forget the moment when I saw good Mr. Hallowday coming through the wood, with Merry in his arms. I mean to have the picture of that scene one of these days, to hang in my study.”

“And I mean to have, in my parlour, Fred

Allan leading me by the hand out of that same wood," said Mark Brady. "What will you have, Put Holley?"

"The scene in the wood, where we were all eating the stew with our hands."

"That would be too ridiculous," said Percy Dobbs. "I should like to have the scene where we sat, all nice and clean, at the luncheon-table at Mr. Hallowday's."

"With silver forks in your hands," said Mark Brady, laughing.

"I really do not remember whether they were silver or not, Sir."

"Well, excuse me, Percy; that is a good omen," replied Mark.

"Frederic, you have not told us what scene you should like best."

Frederic hesitated. The boys urged him; still he declined. Their curiosity was the more excited. At length he said, — "The picture I would have hung over the mantel-piece in my parlour should be something of this sort. The porch to a Gothic church. A graceful elm hanging over it. Two pale and weary boys lying

asleep under the porch. A beautiful young girl, with a basket on one arm, and a pitcher in her hand, standing and looking with wonder and compassion at the strangers."

CHAPTER XXII.

PICTURES FROM REAL LIFE.

MANY years after, a gentleman and lady were sitting, one evening, in a neatly furnished parlour, before a bright fire. A picture had just been suspended over the mantel-piece.

"I cannot believe, Mr. Allan, that I ever looked like that," said the lady. "See how light the curls are. My hair is now a dark brown."

"It has changed wonderfully since that time, my dear Etta; but it was precisely the color that Mr. Long has there painted it, the day that you stood by the porch of the church at Brenton. He never would have retained such a perfect recollection of you,

if he had not seen you every day for a month, while he was so kindly nursed at your father's house. Poor Merry, though he cannot use his feet, has the perfect use of his head and hands. Who would have thought that he could ever become so distinguished an artist ! ”

“ Or you, Frederic, so excellent a lawyer ! ”

“ Or you, Etta Hallowday, my wife ! ”

“ And what has become of Percy Dobbs ? ” inquired Mrs. Allan.

“ Percy is a proof of what application and perseverance can do. He lost the fortune which his uncle left him, and has become a physician. You have heard of the celebrated pamphlet, ‘ On Cleanliness, as a Means of preserving Health,’ by Dr. Dobbs ? ”

“ Certainly I have. My father thinks it an admirable treatise. He read it aloud to us one evening at Brenton. By the way, it was the very evening after the Rev. Nicholas Bolton had officiated for father at our church. Mr. Bolton preached a very eloquent sermon. Mamma thought it was the

most practical sermon she had ever heard from so young a man."

"It was very kind and thoughtful in Mark Brady, to send all five of us the pictures which our youthful fancy painted at Nut Hill. He is rich, and one object he had in view was to patronize Mr. Meredith Long. I should like to see 'The Ragout,' as Mr. Holley's picture is called, — the ludicrous scene in the wood, where we all helped ourselves to gypsy broth out of an old iron kettle."

"I think the most interesting picture of the five is the one that Mr. Brady ordered for himself, — where you, Frederic, are leading the blinded boy out of the wood."

"No, my dear, the best picture you have not heard of yet. It was Mr. Long's own design, and was presented to Mr. Brady as a token of gratitude from the artist himself. It is the awful scene of the burning tent. Mark Brady has just dragged Merry Long from the flames; the helpless boy is lying upon the ground while Mark, Putnam, and Nicholas, bewildered with terror, are eagerly

looking towards the blazing remains of the tent, for their missing companions. The picture is admirably executed, and the artist has entitled it

“THE DEPARTURE FROM LAW AND ORDER.”

THE END.









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